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Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith

Fairy Lore in Early Modern British Drama and Culture

Regina Buccola

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Preface

THIS PROJECT BEGAN, AS SO MANY SOLID RESEARCH LEADS DO, WITH A STUdent's question. My introductory Shakespeare class and I had read *The Comedy of Errors* and *Anthony and Cleopatra*; we had historicized these texts and their portrayals of intransigent, sexually aggressive women by examining popular early modern English beliefs about witchcraft. When we got to Helena, the king-healer, husband-chaser heroine of *All's Well That Ends Well*, one of my students asked, "Why isn't *she* a witch?" I found that I had no satisfactory answer for him—at least, no answer that I felt satisfied offering.

Thus began a spate of research on early modern English witches who practiced healing arts on their social betters and lived to tell about it, and women who engaged in politically pregnant prophesying in a country in which the delineation between church and state had blurred, but managed to dodge severe punishment for sedition. With increasing frequency, I read about women who claimed to do all of this not with the aid of the devil, but with the assistance of fairies. Often, indeed, specifically with the aid of the fairies' mysterious, overtly sexualized mistress, the fairy queen. Soon, I found myself reading about witches only to find the snatches of material that their depositions contained about encounters with fairies—snatches only because this material was not deemed important by early modern court reporters for one quite simple reason: it was not damning, while talk of covens and demonic pacts and copulation with the Prince of Darkness himself most certainly was. To utterly kill the suspense, Helena of *All's Well* would not have been regarded as a witch by Shakespeare's early seventeenth-century audiences, even though she engages in questionable healing and sexual practices, because these same attributes might well have aligned her with the fairy faithful—a class of people increasingly regarded as merely foolish by the London literati and by early modern legal authorities, and therefore not liable to the torturous interrogations and punishments meted out to those whose spiritual company emanated from the fiery confines of the Other Place.

In early modern England, fairies were associated with women and

women's work, as well as stereotyped female characteristics (i.e., small and lithe with a proclivity for dancing and singing and perfectly at home among the flowers). Perhaps these associations sprang from the fact that women truly did tell the stories about fairies, as writers such as Thomas Nashe and Reginald Scot asserted that they did. If so, what more logical escapist fare could there be for an overworked householder than a group of air spirits that could be blamed for any and all accidents in the dairy and kitchen, as well as for the fractiousness of colicky infants? If not, what better way to relegate both such tales and their alleged tellers to a lower rung on the ladder of prestige than to feminize them? For far too long, scholars of early modern literature have been as dismissive of fairy lore as Nashe and Scot. In dismissing these traditions from the collective radar screen, we have passed by crucial narrative details in the plots of the numerous early modern plays that invoke fairies, particularly with respect to their female characters.

Fairy tradition has lost out in scholarly, critical convention to the more masculine mythologies of Christianity and classical Greece and Rome, in which female deities either serve masculine gods or are themselves masculinized (i.e., Diana as a buskined warrior). The fairy tradition is every bit as significant in our critical attempts to situate early modern texts in their historical contexts as the references to classical texts and struggles associated with state-mandated religious beliefs are widely agreed to be.[1] In fact, fairy beliefs and the popular plays and public debates associated with them played an important role in the, at times, violent doctrinal battles waged throughout the period. Early modern writers ranging from James I (*Daemonologie*) to Robert Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*) to Reginald Scot (*The Discoverie of Witchcraft*) published attacks on fairy belief that, paradoxically, served to preserve and perpetuate the traditions. A number of published accounts of the witch trials that occurred in Britain during the Tudor and Stuart dynasties include references to fairies.[2] During the early modern period of religious reform, fairy belief came to be reviled as the antithesis of Christianity, particularly by Protestants and Puritans. Religious reformers equated Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary, the prominence of the saints, and the lavish ceremony of the Catholic Mass with the polytheistic pagan tradition and, often, with pagan-linked fairy belief.

It is largely because of the fact that fairies and the beliefs associated with them have been feminized over the years that fairy traditions have been elided from critical consideration of early modern texts.[3] I am reclaiming the fairies, their stories, and the histories of some of the women who participated in the development and pres-

Frontispiece from Countess D'Aulnoi, *Queen Mab: Containing a Select Collection of Only the Best, Most Instructive, and Entertaining Tales of the Fairies* (London: J. Dodsley, 1770). While a woman tells the tale to a group of rapt children and, apparently, another household servant, note the presence of the young master among the group in the nursery. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Newberry Library, shelfmark Case Y 1565.A92.)

ervation of those traditions. Without them, ''the Elizabethan world picture''—and the Jacobean one, for that matter—is woefully incomplete.

Fairies were imaginative responses to the stresses of life in a rapidly changing world. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Britain witnessed significant social changes, including religious reforms with immense sociopolitical implications and a widening gap between urban, mercantile culture and rural, agrarian life. The powers and characteristics popularly attributed to fairies serve as a measure of early modern sociocultural anxieties in the face of these changes. The socially significant fairy attributes most often invoked in early modern drama and popular lore are their erratic oscillation between benevolent and malevolent treatment of humans, their ambiguous relationship to other supernatural forces dichotomized as divine and demonic, their penchant for intruding into human love affairs, and their abduction of humans as brides (or paramours), midwives, and changeling infants.

Early modern popular belief granted fairies the ability to slip out of socially constructed gender and class categories. Such beliefs constitute a subtle protest to social strictures governing gender and the gendered body that were being subtly redefined and solidified during this period. I place the most emphasis on the impact that fairy fluidity had upon female sociocultural roles and identities because of the patriarchal nature of early modern society. From a materialist feminist critical perspective, class positions and gender roles were ideologically ordered and assigned in such a culture to the advantage of men of the highest social rank. A subversion of these constructs would, therefore, be focused on the interests that have been left out of the equation or subordinated within it—those of women and other members of the lower social classes. Like female and servant characters, fairies engaged primarily in domestic labor and light agricultural work. Unlike women and members of the lower classes, fairies did not necessarily perform such tasks along the class and gender lines normalized in early modern England and did not necessarily exhibit stereotyped class or gender traits while doing so. Thus, the fairy queen might provide a human servant a mystical healing aid. An adult male fairy might pose as a puling infant in the famous fairy changeling switch. Since humans defined what fairies did, the departures from social conventions that appear in popular lore about fairies reveal resistance to standard gender roles and behavior.

The early modern conception of fairies figured them as utterly liminal figures. They at times acted in ways similar to pagan gods or

witches and their demonic familiars, yet they were something other than gods or demons. In their status as something other than divine or demonic, fairies occupied an ambiguous spiritual zone that gave no clear sense of their moral stature or the effect that interaction with them might be likely to have on a human's spiritual account. Demons occupied a position opposed in a clearly polar way to the Christian God and his angels. It was, therefore, doctrinally easy to rationalize the condemnation and execution of the devil's earthly emissary, the witch, as godly work. Fairies, however, posed a problem. Since they were not apparently demonic and had an equally unclear relationship to the Christian paradise and its gatekeepers, good Christians had no hard and fast rule to apply to those who chanced to interact with them or to engage in healing or prophetic work with their alleged assistance. Refusing to believe in them and, certainly, harming mortals who claimed to be in constant contact with them apparently seemed unnecessarily dangerous ideas.

My forays into the early modern notion of fairyland have led me to reexamine my initial readings of early modern theatrical standards that feature fairy characters, such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*. However, my approach to almost all early modern English plays has been irrevocably changed by what I have learned about fairy lore traditions, and the complex interaction between fairy beliefs and the ideological crises that marked the early modern period of religious reform. Aspects of these plays that have been largely dismissed as fairy fluff take on new significance when the complex belief system that stands behind the depiction of fairies and other supernatural figures in the plays is more fully understood.

When playwrights link dramatic heroines who defy social laws and conventions governing gender roles to fairy figures, they repeatedly permit them to mount a wide array of successful challenges to the sociocultural order. The women who are aligned with the fairies in early modern plays are linked with fairies in liminality: they engage in socially aberrant behavior but are not subject to the damnation that might otherwise result from their conduct. Fairy lore and the liberties accorded its spritely subjects provided a credible alibi for women who rebelled against their socially scripted roles as dutiful daughters, wives, and mothers. In real life, women who absented themselves from spouse and community for periods ranging to seven years could claim to have been with the fairies. Women who had malformed or mentally retarded infants in a society that perceived such natural birth irregularities as a curse from God could

claim that it was the hand of the fairies that had wrought these aberrations.

On the stage, lore regarding fairy guardianship over true love matches provided a sociocultural safety net for women who successfully defied patriarchal orders governing whom they married and how the marital arrangements were made. As I demonstrate in chapters one and two, characters such as Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Ann Page in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* are thwarted in their bold attempts to secure the spouse of their choice in defiance of the men socially positioned to deny the matches until they enter the fairy wood on the margins of their respective communities. Escape to the green world does not in itself suffice; fairy guardianship provides the key to success. In *The Alchemist,* the subject of chapter three, Ben Jonson explores contemporary concerns with appropriate gender behavior, theatricality, and religious reform in his wickedly funny depiction of a whore who pretends to be both the Fairy Queen and a mad mystic. Fairy beliefs were used in a number of religiopolitical tracts of this era to discuss allegorically the social impact of increasingly sharp sectarian divisions. Reconceiving the significance of fairy beliefs for sectarian debates in this era restores Dol Common to her rightfully prominent place as an equal member of the venture tripartite. Chapter four examines the power that invocations of fairy lore had to neutralize threats to the social order suggested by violations of class and gender norms on the early modern stage. I explore the subtle ways in which *Cymbeline* refers to fairies at key moments of class- and gender-role subversion. Religious controversy is a factor in this play, too; it relies on a pagan setting to camouflage implicit plot references to the contention surrounding religious reform in the early seventeenth century. References to fairies in this classical landscape problematize this dodge, pointing as they do to the pagan associations that religious reformers used both to discourage belief in fairies and to build mutually damning connections between fairy belief and Catholicism.

Finally, I end the project where it actually began, with a consideration of Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well.* I take the long way around to exploring the fairy associations in the play, first considering why she might, in fact, logically have been taken for a witch. Exploring the ways in which Helena's mysterious healing abilities, audacity in popping the question to a man who outranks her, and undaunted ingenuity in solving a sexual riddle might well have tainted her with a witchcraft charge helps draw into sharp relief the contours and potentiality of the fairy defense. Scholars have long recognized that fairy lore informs Shakespeare's source story in Bo-

caccio's *Decameron* but have at most considered the play in light of fairy tales. Early modern fairy beliefs had little truck with fairy tale narratives, however.

In the introduction, I orient the reader to the key elements of fairy belief of relevance in the subsequent chapters. The relevant traditions are summarized each time they recur in the text, but readers may, at times, find it useful to refer to the fuller account provided in the introduction. Throughout, I have taken the approach described by Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan in *Scottish Fairy Belief* as "'experience-centred'"[4]—I am not debating whether or not Shakespeare and Jonson believed in fairies. I am concerned with how and why they deployed these popular beliefs—still countenanced by much of their audience—in their plays, and what the presence of these beliefs means. The new verdicts rendered on many of the female characters in these plays when one gives them the benefit of the fairy defense are revelatory. Perhaps, in future, early modern scholars will welcome fairies into classroom and study with a new seriousness.

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Fairies, Fractious Women, and the Old Faith

Introduction

> Folklore is a living link with a distant past; a silken thread by which we may (somewhat dubiously) wander into the maze of old ideas and early beliefs, and find our way among them.

THE CROWD MILLS ABOUT, DUST SHIFTING UNDER THEIR FEET. THE LATE afternoon sun slants across the towers in front of them, casting wide shadows over the raised stage toward which everyone is pushing, craning necks to see, straining to hear. A young boy appears on the stage dressed in some court lady's cast-off finery: an elegant gown embroidered with golden thread that glints in the shafts of light, the soft curls of his wig held out of his face by a sparkling tiara. He is accompanied by a number of other young boys dressed in simple green jerkins, hose, and slippers. The stage is almost bare, except for a tapestry depicting a woodland scene, but the audience understands what they are seeing with the "queen's" first line: "Come, now a roundel and a fairy song."[1] This stage represents the fairy wood; this boy in a tiara is the fairy queen; and the boys in green are her fairy train.

Fairies were stock characters for a time on the early modern stage, particularly in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. I explore the significance of their appearance there and consider the ways in which they served as touchstones for shifting early modern attitudes with respect to gender roles, class positions, and state-sponsored institutions such as the church. I demonstrate the ways in which these "airy nothings" actually provided an outlet for a wide array of social tensions and pressures along with competing notions of how best to address them. Fairies were imaginative creations dreamed up in response to and as a release from the stresses of life in a rapidly changing world. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Britain saw several significant social changes—including religious reforms and a widening gap between an urban, mercantile culture and the rural, agricultural lifestyle—that combined to diversify the class-gender hierarchy. A careful examination of the powers and characteristics popularly attributed to fairies serves as a measure

Fairies dance near a hill in which they presumably live, in an image from an old English chapbook. Given the opposition to fairy beliefs under reform Christianity, their Puritan-style attire is rather amusing. (Reproduced with the kind permission of Janet Bord and the Fortean Picture Library.)

of early modern sociocultural anxieties in the face of these changes, and possible means of alleviating them. In order fully to appreciate the prevalence of fairy characters and the lore associated with them in early modern drama, we must explore the sociocultural possibilities that staged fairies offered for both the characters they interacted with and those they represented (who were quite often either female or engaged in activities socioculturally ascribed to women), and for the audiences who saw them so staged.[2]

Recently, a number of scholars have begun the arduous task of rescuing fairy beliefs and traditions from the category of "folklore," which has, in its turn, been unfairly relegated to ghetto status in intellectual circles. To date, some of the most thorough analyses of the relationship between popular belief and its deployment in literature have been undertaken with regard to Victorian literature, particularly in the work of Jack Zipes, Carole Silver, U. C. Knoepflmacher, and Nina Auerbach. However, a growing number of early modern scholars—significantly, almost all women, almost all engaged in materialist feminist analyses—have begun to turn their attention to the

prevalence of fairy belief in early modern British drama. Wendy Wall and Mary Ellen Lamb precede me in discussing the uses to which Shakespeare put fairy lore in his plays, particularly *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and Diane Purkiss has given all of us a succinct and helpful history of the fairies in *At the Bottom of the Garden*. Wall focuses on the ways in which fairy beliefs were gradually modulated over the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to reinforce the bourgeois values of the emergent middle class;[3] Lamb traces the complex relationship between women as the ostensible sources of the tales that serve as inspiration for male playwrights and the ways that women are in turn depicted in the resultant plays.[4]

The master analyst of all things faery, Jack Zipes, complains that folk and fairy tales are lumped together indiscriminately when they are actually distinct entities, and both dismissed as "make-believe stories with no direct reference to a particular community or historical tradition." Zipes castigates literary theorists and cultural critics for not only failing to distinguish the two traditions, but also disastrously failing to "recognize that the impact of these works stems from their imaginative grasp and symbolic depiction of social *realities*." He goes on to note:

> "Once there was a time when this was not the case. Once there was a time when folk tales were part of communal property and told with original and fantastic insights by gifted storytellers who gave vent to the frustration of the common people and embodied their needs and wishes in the folk narratives. Not only did the tales serve to unite the people of a community and help bridge a gap in their understanding of social problems in a language and narrative mode familiar to the listeners' experiences, but their aura illuminated the possible fulfillment of utopian longings and wishes which did not preclude social integration."[5]

In play after play in early modern Britain, theatrical enactments of popular narratives about fairies implicitly challenge both the gender and the class norms that the patriarchal, urban-centered economy of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seems to have privileged. In addition, given the pagan associations that fairy lore gained in an era of religious establishment and the concomitant links that the establishment forged between pagan fairy rituals and the alleged ostentation of Catholic rituals, the fairy presence in early modern theaters had virtually unavoidable religious import. To complete the conjuring circle in which fairies danced in the early modern imagination, the theaters, too, were regarded by many religious reformers as pagan distractions from an upstanding Christian life. Fairies were theatrical because, like actors, they were metamor-

phic. The Catholic Mass was theatrical because, as did stage plays, it relied on elaborate costumes and props, such as gilt and bejeweled chalices. Thus, a cult of mutual condemnation was born.

As an instance of this mutual castigation society, consider the fulmination of Samuel Harsenet against ritual practices of both the fairy and the Catholic kind. Harsenet fumes:

> if a *Peeter-penny*, or an houzle-egge were behind, or a patch of tyth vnpaid to the Church (*Iesu Maria*) then ware where you walke for feare of *bullbeggers, spirits, witches, urchins, Elves, hags, fairies, Satyrs, Pans, Faunes, Sylvans, Kit with the Candlesticke, Tritons, Centaurs, Dwarffs, Giants, impes, Calcars, coniurers, Nymphs, changlings, scritchowles, Incubus the spurne, the mare, the man in the oake, the fire-drake, the puckle, Tom thumbe, hobgoblin, Tom Tumbler, Boneles and the rest*: and what girle, boy, or old wisard would be so hardy to step over the threshold in the night for an half-penny worth of mustard amongst this frightfull crue without a dosen of *auemaries*, two dosen of crosses surely signed, and halfe a dosen *Pater nosters*, and the commending himself to the tuition of *St. Vncumber*, or els our blessed Lady?[6]

Catholic rituals and rural superstitions walk hand in hand in this tirade, in which prayers to saints are granted all the force of childhood terrors such as the puckle or hobgoblin. All are lumped together as the province of children or practitioners of witchcraft.

Keith Thomas, the first to conduct a thoroughgoing examination of the sociocultural import of early modern fairy beliefs, explains that some Protestant theologians considered fairies the creations of Catholics bent on holding people in their thrall. ''This much-echoed view was grossly unfair, not only because fairy-beliefs were older than Roman Catholicism, but because the medieval Church had itself been hostile to fairy mythology.'' Many of those who held such views located the connection in ''the Roman Catholic character of the fairy kingdom'' in its status as part pagan, part hierarchical. Thomas traces mounting hostility toward fairy belief to the Middle Ages, when ecclesiastics objected to efforts to pacify the spirits in hopes of either deterring harm or garnering rewards, since that constituted the establishment of rival deities to God: ''This hostility was strengthened by the Reformation, whose theologians took away the remaining possibility that fairies might be the ghosts of the dead. Fairies could only be good or evil spirits, and of the two possibilities the latter was much more likely. . . . This was the official doctrine of most Protestant teachers, though like so many other official doctrines its influence upon the people at large was only partial.''[7] One of the indices of the influence of Protestant doctrine on the

populace is the early modern theater. Although there have been many studies of theatrical involvement in early modern religious debates, little has to date been written about the ways in which the fairy plays participate in this process of ideology formation and reformation. The present study constitutes an opening salvo in such a discussion.

"Good Lord, that there are no fairies nowadays"

As did the fairies themselves, holders of highly ambiguous positions with respect to moral standing, gender roles, and basic conviction regarding their existence, Shakespeare, too, alternated uneasily for much of his life between insider and outsider status.[8] He was a country hick in the big city. Once in London, he hovered on its margins literally, as an employee of the scandalous theaters who eventually acquired a pass card to the inner sanctum, the court. And then there is the seemingly irresolvable conundrum of his religious persuasion. Might he have been a member of a recusant Catholic family, with all of the publicly outsider status such a position entailed?[9] Little wonder, then, that almost all of Shakespeare's plays contain allusions to those rural spirits that figured so prominently in the religiopolitical controversies fought out at the doctrinal and legal levels in the court. Likewise Shakespeare's friend, fellow actor, and, at times, theatrical rival, Ben Jonson. Child of a bricklayer and, like Shakespeare, stranger to the universities, Jonson graduated from the suburban theaters to the innermost sanctum of the court, writing masques on command for King James as poet laureate, until he severed ties with his visionary collaborator, Inigo Jones. Jonson held court at taverns with a band of fiercely loyal devotees but was capable of flashes of anger that, in one case, resulted in the death of a fellow actor. A vituperative critic of Puritan hypocrisy, Jonson himself vacillated on his religious convictions, converting to Catholicism under a devout Protestant monarch, a piece of perversity indelibly stamped with Jonsonian flair. Jonson, too, calls upon the fairies, although—given the urban setting for most of his plays—his fairies are always charlatans who highlight the outrageousness of the action that they oversee in neon.

The majority of Shakespeare's plays that invoke fairy lore and/or fairy characters skirt the implications of the significance fairy beliefs came to bear to the political and religious debates surrounding reform Christianity in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To take as an example one of the plays touching upon fairy belief that

I do not discuss here, consider *The Tempest*. The play is linked to Italy, the seat of the Catholicism with which fairy lore came increasingly to be associated over the course of the Reformation. The Italian link established in the play mitigates the potential religious import of the fairy figures who appear in it, since the presumptive Catholicism of the plays' Italian characters can account for any nascent "popery" that might appear in the text.

The Tempest shifts in its superabundant exposition between two politically and religiously significant locales:

1. an obscure island inhabited by the orphaned son of a devil and a witch—along with a sylph[10]—lorded over by a deposed, shipwrecked Italian magus, and
2. the corrupted duchy of Milan whence Prospero was exiled after his studies, including magic, diverted him from his rule

For early modern theologians—including the monarch for whom this play was likely written, James I—there was nothing to choose between them. Devil was to sylph as Catholicism was to black magic. The radical otherness of these locales and characters served as a convenient smokescreen for any subversive religiopolitical ideas that might emerge from a play in which the hero, Prospero, proves less human(e) than his servant-sprite, Ariel, who is compelled to chastise his master into morality. Prospero learns Christian pity and forgiveness of the sylph, who tells him that he knows his heart would melt at the sight of his enemies in the throes of exquisite psychological torture on the grounds that "Mine would, sir, were I human" (V.i.20). The credulity-straining romance plot involving a band of Italians stranded on an unidentified island somewhere between the African continent and Italy sufficiently detaches it from the Protestant confines of the British Isles to alleviate any pressure the playwright might otherwise have faced for the implications of such scenarios. Given the dubious distinctions drawn between demons and fairies on the one hand, and pagan superstitions associated with fairies and the ritual excesses of Catholicism on the other, a Prospero who must learn forgiveness from an air spirit might otherwise have raised questions about the playwright's religious sensibilities.

In *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on the other hand, Shakespeare dodges the religious controversies encoded in the plays' fairy lore foundations by explicitly setting them in pre-Christian Athens. Hermia is threatened with a choice between entering the sisterhood or being executed before she is saved from either fate by a proactively sought-out sojourn in the fairy wood. There is a decidedly Catholic

savor to Theseus's menacing order that the intractable Hermia adopt a life of chastity that sounds remarkably like the Catholic sisterhood if she continues to defy her father's wish that she marry Demetrius. Theseus says that Hermia will be held hostage in a "cloister" as a "barren sister." The earliest cloisters date from medieval times, and the female attendants of pagan shrines are referred to as votaresses or priestesses, but not typically addressed as "sister." In keeping with the play's pre-Christian setting, the "hymns" that Hermia will spend her time chanting will be to the Moon and not a Catholic saint, but the terminological links to Roman Catholicism here are still strong. Significantly, although Catholic doctrine is glanced at, it appears as a threat: "Either to die the death or to abjure / Forever the society of men" (I.i.65–66). Living as a "barren sister" is presented as at least equal to immediate death. This scene, therefore, offers no particular indication of Shakespeare's religious biases, but does encapsulate some key doctrinal distinctions at issue during the Reformation. The Catholic resonances in the play hardly end here, however, since Hermia will be saved from the barren sisterhood by her own boldness and daring as it is seconded by the fairies.[11] Were anyone to take issue with the play's mischievous dance with Catholicism, the ready response available is anachronism. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is ostensibly set in pre-Christian Athens, and the play was staged in reform Christian Britain, where convents and monasteries had been largely shut down.[12]

A similar set of circumstances governs the invocation of fairy influence in another play that I do not fully analyze here, *The Comedy of Errors*. There, the confusion of two sets of identically named twins separated in infancy and paired as masters and servants in adulthood is ascribed to the fairies. The Syracusan Dromio, horrified to see his master accosted by the wife of Antipholus of Ephesus,[13] declares:

> O, for my beads! I cross me for a sinner.
> This is the fairy land. O spite of spites,
> We talk with goblins, elves and sprites!
> If we obey them not, this will ensue:
> They'll suck our breath, or pinch us black and blue.
> (II.ii.187–91)

This is but one of many references to the fairies in a play in which the twin muddle makes inadvertent changelings of the unwitting brothers among their friends and family members. Dromio calls for

his Catholic rosary beads to ward off the fairies, a logical conflation in a culture that tried to maintain that only backward-thinking Catholics believed that there were fairies. The mother of the two Antipholi emerges from the convent where she has lived as abbess in the play's final scene as a dea ex machina, to sort out the identity confusions, and reclaim her husband (who has also miraculously turned up in Ephesus). Conjuring up the alternating sexual license and sexual governance believed to be provided by the fairies, Adriana, wife of Antipholus of Ephesus, poses a pregnant question in the play's dénouement: "Which of you two did dine with me today?" (V.i.370). The virtual victim of an unintentional changeling trick, she finds that it was not her husband, but his identical twin, now her brother-in-law, and the fiancé of her sister. This is the fairyland, indeed.[14]

Consider, too, Jonson's scandalous collaboration with George Chapman and John Marston, *Eastward Ho*.[15] Issues of class, religion, and the appropriate practice of gender roles run riot throughout the play but come to an acute point in a scene between the lady aspirant, Gertrude, and her "maid," Sindefy, a whore posing as a lady in waiting. Sindefy's name, as do so many of Jonson's saucy monikers, glances at the ostentatious "purity" of reform sectarians who adopted similarly grandiose appellations. And then there is the important biographical detail casually dropped about her early in the play by her pimp master, Quicksilver: he "rescued" her from plans to enter the sisterhood.[16] In a scene intended to underscore Gertrude's frivolity and foolishness in the face of financial ruin, she cries, "Good Lord, that there are no fairies nowadays, Sin!" In response to Sindefy's rejoinder, "Why, madam?" Gertrude effuses:

> To do miracles, and bring ladies money. Sure, if we lay in a cleanly house, they would haunt it, Sin! I'll try. I'll sweep the chamber soon at night, and set a dish of water o' the hearth. A fairy may come, and bring a pearl or a diamond. We do not know, Sin. Or there may be a pot of gold hid o' the backside, if we had tools to dig for 't. Why may not we two rise early i' the morning, Sin, afore anybody is up, and find a jewel i' the streets worth a hundred pound? May not some great court-lady, as she comes from revels at midnight, look out of her coach, as 'tis running, and lose such a jewel, and we find it? Ha?
> *Sin.* They are pretty waking dreams, these.[17]

The heavy irony of a crass young woman's floundering about for any means of financial gain that could be used to leverage her class status while expressing a longing for the aid of the famously wealthy fairies to a whore nicknamed "Sin" would scarcely have been lost on Jonson's audience. This urban social climber still knows the rural rules for placating fairies and, perhaps, persuading them to do one good: maintaining "a cleanly house" and providing hospitality. She is enough of a cynic to harbor more plausible theories about the origin of wealth that appears mysteriously overnight; yet, that coach does rattle past at midnight, a portentous time in the clock of fairyland.

Transgressive conduct—particularly with respect to women—is repeatedly sanctioned when fairies are either directly staged or invoked. Inured against the potentialities that fairy belief offered to those who told such tales, scholars have been too quick to dismiss the significance that such narratives might have had for the contemporary audiences that exchanged them and laughed and cried seeing them enacted on the stage. Those who have ignored the import of such tales—particularly for the women most repeatedly and directly associated with them from both outside the plays as the originary tale tellers and within them as characters aligned with the fairies in varying forms of sociocultural rebellion[18]—are guilty of regarding fairy lore teleologically. We always already know that the women subversive of patriarchal hegemony and the fairies they conjured up as guides and protectors did not live happily ever after. I have taken on the task of trying to imagine why one would tell such stories, why playwrights would have employed such tales in their plays, and what the audiences for such tales would have made of them, whether by the fireside, or in the Globe Theatre. It is necessary, to execute such a task properly, to forget how the story ended or, at least, to imagine that it might have ended differently.

Finally, I wish to argue that the reception of fairy material in the works of Shakespeare is infected with a particularly pernicious form of teleological thinking, predicated on our knowledge of the elite status enjoyed by his plays and poetry, as the very pinnacle of human creative achievement. Diane Purkiss asserts: "it is questionable whether Shakespeare knew *anything* about fairies from oral sources at all," largely making the liberties he takes with popular beliefs about fairy physicality (mostly size) the basis for this claim.[19] On what grounds can one assert that a grammar-school educated man from the hamlet of Stratford-on-Avon was not "knowledgeable" about popular culture? This seems a back construction predicated on the current reception of folk belief as a specialized, second-class

study, whereas the study of Shakespeare is required of all who would profess to be literate and cultured. Shakespeare's mother grew up on a farm in Wilmcote, his wife on a farm in Shottery. I find it incredible that the women in his world would not have known about popular fairy beliefs and consider it more likely than not that they—and he—were familiar with such stories. In Purkiss's analysis, the respect that Shakespeare commands today as the cream of the theatrical and literary crop is made to cast a long shadow backward, over his "upstart crow" status in his actual lifetime, and the social background that produced it. We must endeavor to get out from under this shadow, taking our consideration of fairy characters in the drama beyond footnote explanations as to the identity of Robin Goodfellow. What do fairy narratives reveal about the social, political, and religious milieu from which they emerged? What did they mean to the playwrights, poets and pamphleteers who deployed them, and to the eager audiences who watched, read, or listened to their work? In order to address these questions fully, it is necessary to assess the broad outlines of the fairy beliefs with which early modern Britons were most conversant.

"An essay of the nature and actions of the subterranean (and, for the most part,) invisible people, hertofoir going under the name of elves, faunes, and fairies, or the lyke"

Robert Kirk, a minister in Aberfoyle, Scotland, who produced a Gaelic version of the Bible by special commission of Bishop Bedel in London, wrote one of the first compendiums of and commentaries upon the fairy lore of the British Isles in the late seventeenth century.[20] Given his combined career as roving minister and writer, Kirk had firsthand knowledge of fairy belief as it was professed from England to Scotland to Ireland. It is no coincidence that Kirk was a recognized authority on both Christianity and faery as the evolution of the two sets of beliefs intersects in many complex ways in the early modern period.

Kirk begins his *Secret Commonwealth* (1691) with a basic description of "the Good People": "said to be of a midle Nature betuixt Man and Angel, as were Dæmons thought to be of old; of intelligent studious Spirits, and light changable Bodies, (lyke those called Astral,) somewhat of the Nature of a condensed Cloud, and best seen in Twilight . . . they can make them [their bodies] appear or disappear att Pleasure." Kirk goes on to characterize fairy bodies as "chamælion-

lyke'' and ''of congealled Aire . . . some tymes caried aloft, other whiles [they] grovel in different Schapes, and enter into any Cranie or Clif of the Earth where Air enters, to their ordinary Dwellings.''[21] Thus fairies are an amalgamation of human, animal, and spirit; they move as the air moves and inhabit seemingly solid ground. They are also shape shifters, an attribute that links them to the actors who portrayed them on the early modern stage: the boy actors who also, significantly, played women.

Ironically, Kirk himself became a part of the very lore that he committed himself to preserving. According to Andrew Lang, editor of the second edition of Robert Kirk's *Secret Commonwealth*, Kirk was born circa 1641 and ''died (if he did die, which is disputed) in 1692.'' Kirk ''died'' when walking on a fairy hill: ''he sunk down in a swoon, which was taken for death.'' Kirk reportedly then appeared to a relative, saying he was not dead but a prisoner in fairyland (presumably for telling fairy secrets in print). He gave instructions for a knife to be thrown over his head when he appeared at the baptism of the child his wife was carrying at the time of his death/capture to ''rescue'' him. Reportedly he did appear, but the assembled company were so surprised that they neglected to throw the knife, hence trapping him forever in fairyland.[22]

Reginald Scot, who attempted to mitigate the destructive effects of foolish superstition, including early modern beliefs in both witches and fairies, nevertheless likely wound up promulgating such beliefs, to some extent, by offering detailed descriptions of their objects in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1651). As does Samuel Harsenet, Scot provides a virtual catalog of fairyland's supposed inhabitants: ''bull beggers, spirits, witches, urchens, elves, hags, fairies, satyrs, pans, faunes, sylens, kit with the cansticke, tritons, centaurs, dwarfes, giants, imps, calcars, conjurors, nymphes, changelings, *Incubus*, Robin good-fellowe, the spoorne, the mare, the man in the oke, the hell waine, the fierdrake, the puckle, Tom thombe, hob gobblin, Tom tumbler, boneles and such other bugs'' (Folio 86).[23] These spirits vary in size, shape, and the moral quality of their behavior, but all of these creatures were associated with the catchall term *fairy*.

Whereas many critics attribute to Shakespeare the first literary conflation of these varied fairy types,[24] Katharine Briggs is quick to point out the inaccuracy of this attribution since a survey of medieval and early modern literature reveals that

> Some of our earliest fairies, the Portunes, are said by Gervase of Tilbury to be only half an inch in height. The mentions of fairies in medieval manuscripts are, indeed, sparse, but they cover most of the types that we

> shall come across later. We have the child-sized fairies whose kingdom Elidor visited, the fairy bride of human size and more than human beauty, the wild hunt, the miraculous passage of time in Fairyland, the fairy who needs a human midwife and is invisible except by the help of a magic ointment, the changeling, the misleading night fairy, the bogey-beast and the Love-Talker or Incubus.[25]

The medieval fairy attributes most often invoked in early modern drama and popular lore—both before and after Shakespeare—are the fairies' small stature, their mischievousness, their involvement in human love affairs, and their interaction with humans as brides, midwives, and changeling infants.

According to Kirk, fairies "are distributed in Tribes and Orders, and have Children, Nurses, Mariages, Deaths, and Burialls, in appearance, even as we, (unles they so do for a Mock-show, or to prognosticate some such things among us.)."[26] This final observation is intriguing, suggesting that fairies supply models for human behavior, an odd circumlocution because fairies are the products of human imagination. In such a formulation, fairies are held accountable for human activities when, in reality, fairies are one imaginative means humans use to explore alternative lifestyle choices, domestic arrangements, and modes of conduct. Kirk found fairies real enough to require a system of government. He notes, "They are said to have aristocraticall Rulers and Laws"; in virtually every sixteenth- and seventeenth-century account of mortal visits to fairyland, the aristocratic ruler is a queen.[27] The female power that dominated fairyland also had traditional connections to ancient pagan belief in a pantheon of gods in which female deities ruled both alongside and, in some instances, over males. Suggesting this pagan side to the fairy nature, Kirk notes the fact that fairies vanished at the name of either God or Jesus, "nor can they act ought at that Time after hearing of that sacred Name."[28] During the early modern period of religious reform, fairy belief came to be reviled as the antithesis of Christianity, particularly by Protestants and Puritans. The multiplicity of fairy figures with responsibilities for or connections to various aspects of agricultural or domestic work led Protestant reformers to construe fairy belief as pagan. Religious reformers at times equated Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary and the prominence of the saints—male or female—with the polytheistic pagan tradition as well and, therefore, associated Catholicism with pagan-linked fairy belief.[29]

James I exerted tremendous influence on early modern conceptions of Christian doctrine and popular belief in demonic forces, in-

cluding both fairies and the capital offense with which fairies were at times associated, witchcraft.[30] He professes an intention to discuss fairies *solus* in his *Daemonologie*, but he vacillates rather assiduously in the chapter assigned to the discussion. James first distinguishes fairies from other kinds of spirits, which he describes as conducting themselves in a manner very similar to that of fairies, and then lumps them in with those same spirits. The chapter devoted to fairies describes four kinds of spirits; the first and second kinds of spirits that James distinguishes from fairies characteristically behave remarkably similarly to fairies, disturbing households and misleading hapless travelers. Indeed, James acknowledges the falsity of the distinctions he has made among the spirits, noting that "although in my discourseing of them, I deuyde them in diuers kindes, yee must notwithstanding there of note my Phrase of speaking in that: For doubtleslie they are in effect, but all one kinde of spirites, who for abusing the more of mankinde, take on these sundrie shapes, and vses diuerse formes of out-ward actiones, as if some were of nature better then other."[31] The implication is that these spirits are all alike in their evil. In essence, James argues that fairies are not real, but "goodly" projections of the devil. Hence, they are an evil force, but because of the devil's power in their manifestation, rather than in and of themselves. Following not only James, but classical thinkers such as Paracelsus, Robert Burton also includes fairies in his discussion of "sublunary Devils" in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*.[32]

The fact remains, however, that both Burton and James distinguish fairies from the demons of which they claim them to be a subspirit; James admits that of all of the nondivine spirits, fairies "were thought to be sonsiest and of best life."[33] Kirk, too, vacillates on the fairy capacity for evil, noting, "They are ever readiest to go on hurtfull Errands, but seldom will be the Messengers of great Good to Men." Nevertheless, he concludes, "They do not all the Harme which appearingly they have Power to do." That harm that fairies do cause is done "as if they acted not malitiously, like Devills at all, but in Sport, lyke Buffoons and Drolls."[34] Kirk finds that fairies, like spirits such as angels, are elemental spirits, subject to the same sorts of desires that motivate humans, yet, at the same time, superior in some ambiguous way to humans.[35] The complete uncertainty surrounding the treatment that fairies might be expected to give humans paradoxically produced their popular identification as "the Good People"[36]: "Since their enmity is greatly feared, a complex etiquette has developed to avoid angering fairies, who are thus often referred to euphemistically as 'The little people,' 'the good neighbours,' or in Ireland, 'the gentry.'"[37] They are called good to ward

off their evil, referred to as neighbors so that they will not behave as enemies.

Popular culture provided at least three explanations for the origin of the fairies and their realm that are steeped in Christian mythology. The first of these myths of origin cast a pall of darkness over both fairies and fairyland, positing that fairies were companions of the angels that fell from paradise with Satan and, therefore, subject to the torments of hell at the Last Judgment. Other theories about the nature of fairies aligned fairyland in some way with purgatory, the Catholic-conceived intermediary zone between heaven and hell. One theory—explicitly aligned with religious conceptions of purgatory—maintained that fairyland was a space reserved for the souls of those dead who as yet belonged neither in heaven nor in hell, suspended between the poles of eternal salvation and damnation until Last Judgment. Andrew Lang notes that people abducted into fairyland reported meeting recently deceased relatives who cautioned them not to eat the food, lest they be trapped there forever as in "the pre-Christian Hades."[38] Belief in purgatory is connected to Catholicism, too, since one of the teachings that distinguished "popery" from Protestantism was the Catholic belief in just such a temporary storehouse for departed souls.[39] Over the course of the seventeenth century, this association between fairies and holdover Catholic beliefs and practices began to be used in reform Christian religious writings. So, for example, Christopher Clobery wrote verses on each of the seven deadly sins in which the devil is an elf and lust is an Ignis Fatuus, and much lamentation is offered for those poor souls "*pixie-lead* in *Popish* piety."[40]

A related theory construed fairyland to be a pure in-between zone—an ambiguous space of neither damnation nor salvation where the fairies would forever remain, even after the Second Coming. This final theory did not, however, associate the fairies with the souls of dead humans. Robert Burton summarizes all of these theories, attributing the various explanations to the Jesuits, furtive operatives of the Catholic Church in Protestant England. He claims that it is the Jesuits "who will have them [fairies] to be Devils, or the souls of damned men that seek revenge, or else souls out of Purgatory that seek ease."[41] In a mutually damning relation, Catholicism is ridiculed for its perceived connections to fairy superstition, and fairy belief is stigmatized by its association with the Catholic menace to Protestantism.

Alan Sinfield describes the dichotomy-driven ideologies of reform Christian sects in a way that makes clear why reform sectarians had little tolerance for the ambiguities of a Catholicism that allowed for

a spiritual way station such as purgatory, or a popular tradition of fairy belief that tolerated behavior that ranged freely across the moral scale. Sinfield asserts that: ''Polarisation of good and evil is characteristic of protestantism. Catholics and humanists posited a sequence of careful gradations between the extremes of good and evil, with mediatory agents and the continuous opportunity to repent. Protestants replaced this complicated structure with a dichotomy, all or nothing: a person either has grace or has not.''[42] Hence, Catholicism offered the theological space for constructs such as the fairyland linked purgatory and not quite angelic, not quite demonic spirits such as fairies, whereas Protestantism did not. Religious reformers perceived the retention of fairy beliefs among the members of their flock as a danger to the stability of the politically linked religious doctrines they were trying to enforce. Fairy traditions allowed ideological breeding ground for spiritual tenets (including purgatory, and saints who governed particular days and household dilemmas) that reform Christianity (including Calvinism, Lutheranism, and Puritanism) specifically eliminated. The continued practice or promulgation of fairy belief kept Catholic doctrines alive under another (and a not specifically *religious*) guise. Fairies were always something other—always sliding out of easy categorization, of any definition readily referential to the known or familiar.

The difficulty associated with definitively establishing fairies' moral status spilled over into the mere act of labeling them. There is little consistency to the terminology used seemingly to distinguish different kinds of fairies. Noel Williams contends that ''There was not, as folklorists tend to express it, a 'confusion' of fairies and elves in medieval belief but a tendency of the more generic and more fashionable word [*fairy*] to attract and take over the associative meanings of its rivals.'' Williams refers here to such things as the poet's preference for French-derived terms such as *fée* because of their alliterative or rhyming potential. He later concludes: ''Nor is *fairy* either unique or distinct from other names such as *elf, pixy, puck*, and *goblin.*''[43] Thus that ''knavish sprite'' Puck can go from detailing his allegedly unique exploits to a generically identified fairy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* to accepting Oberon's characterization of him as analogous to fairy spirits in the play's brief exegesis on the nature of such spirits in act 2. Likewise, when women on trial for witchcraft, such as Alisoun Pearson and Isobel Gowdie, report being entertained by the ''Queen of Elfame,'' they are referring in early modern Scottish dialect to the female monarch who governs fairyland.[44]

In response to the self-posed question ''Do these airie Tribes pro-

create?'' Kirk finds that ''there is no more Absurditie for a Spirit to inform ane Infant in Bodie of Airs, than a Bodie composed of dull and drusie Earth.'' Other scholars of fairy lore maintain that fairies procreate, but that they need the assistance of mortals to accomplish the feat. ''Common sense'' as applied to fairy lore suggests that fairies were believed capable of procreation because it is their own undesirable offspring that they leave when they perform a changeling switch. Katherine Briggs, for instance, relates the tale of the Fairy Midwife, in which a fairy husband disguised as a man persuades a human woman to accompany him to fairyland to assist his pregnant wife with her delivery.[45] Peter Rojcewicz claims that ''Humans are essential to fairies for a healthy bloodline. Fairies 'take' mortal women to act as midwives at fairy births. In addition, mortals 'taken' to fairyland as wives and mothers, themselves need the aid of mortal midwives, since these mothers never lose their mortal mixture.'' Richard Jenkins goes even further, noting that one of the central aspects of fairy mythology is ''the believed inability of fairy women either to bear healthy children or to feed them—hence the need to abduct human babies and wet nurses for them.''[46]

Though invulnerable to human weapons and ''better Physicians than wee,'' able quickly to heal any hurts that they do suffer, fairies do, according to Kirk, ''dwindle and decay at a certain Period.'' Fairy mortality is open to debate, however. *The Standard Dictionary of Folklore* asserts, ''In fairyland there is no death, no age, no sickness, no ugliness.'' Thomas Keightley asserts that the fairies ''are either not mortal, or their date of life is indeterminably long; they are of a nature superior to man.''[47] Many writers implicitly suggest the immortality of fairies in distinguishing them from human beings by identifying the latter as ''mortals.''

Fairies are more and less than human, more or less human. They are noncorporeal or, at the very least, of a quite different manner of corporeality than humans. While they mimic human activities, they can perform human tasks at a superhuman rate of speed. They are seldom construed to be bigger than a human child and are often believed to be able to take on the shape of any object of whatever size—animate or inanimate—that they choose. At the same time, as creations of the human imagination, fairies reflect human drives, desires, fears, and frustrations.

Briggs usefully sums up the interconnections between and among the various strands of fairy belief throughout the United Kingdom:

> In some ways the characteristics of the fairies throughout these islands are very much the same. Everywhere there seems some connection be-

> tween fairies and the dead; everywhere secrecy and reserve is needed in the mention of them. Their favours must not be boasted of, they must not be rewarded, it is generally not etiquette even to thank them. Everywhere they are greedy for mortal children, ready to decoy away young girls and nursing mothers—almost everywhere they need the help of human midwives to enable them to bring forth children. In most places they have the power of invisibility, and an ointment or herb is often needed to reveal them to mortals. All over the country some among them help mortals in their work. If their ways and wishes are regarded they give rewards of prosperity, or smaller, more tangible gifts; if they are offended or their taboos are broken the punishment is out of all proportion to the offence.[48]

This complex of beliefs could be readily marshaled by early modern English poets. When they made reference to fairy beliefs, whether it be on page or stage, early modern writers could count on even a glancing reference to, say, a changeling to import a wide array of ideas to their auditors or readers: surreptitious dealing, supernatural influence of a likely malign nature, a diminishing of the value of the person, and possibly, the notion that the person who had gone missing might end up being sacrificed by the fairies to hell. I will now turn attention to some of the specific aspects of early modern British beliefs in fairies that have the greatest relevance to the plays that I will discuss in subsequent chapters.

Fairyland

"Fairyland is never here and now: it's always at a remove, and if the remove isn't time it must be place. It's a world of forbidden wishes surrounded by a magic wall of taboo which must be broken before we can enter it, which we do almost always seemingly against our will, 'carried away' (the phrase is tell tale) as in dreams."[49] The plays which stage a visit to fairyland or at least a fairy-controlled, mystical landscape are directly concerned with forbidden wishes granted only when the desirous humans have been placed in contact with taboo-breaking fairies. Dreamscapes are common in fairy plays too, such as the overt reliance on drug-induced sleep and out-of-control behavior in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, discussed in chapter one, or the waking nightmares that recur for each of the main characters in *Cymbeline*, which will be taken up in chapter four.

Maureen Duffy identifies the pre-Chaucerian *Sir Orfeo* as the source of "the first unequivocal description of fairyland." The poem describes it as "a fair country, bright as the sun on a summer's day,

a flat green plain with a marvellous castle built of gold and precious stones. . . . At night the stones give off a light as bright as the noonday sun.'' In Duffy's words, the poem goes on to suggest that fairyland is inhabited by ''those who seem to have died suddenly; choked while eating, drowned, died in childbirth (a very vulnerable moment), in battle, sleeping or gone mad.'' Although the *Orfeo* predates Chaucer, Duffy contends that ''There is no point of fairy law in this poem that wouldn't have been acceptable and familiar to an English eighteenth-century milkmaid or an Irish nineteenth-century labourer, testimony to the consistency and longevity of fairy belief.''[50] Fairyland conflates protection and menace, the familiar and the exceedingly odd. Small wonder that Jacob Behre could have a vision of vast riches in the side of a mountain and decide that he had glimpsed fairyland,[51] or that a solitary horseman could arrive home from a journey to report that he had suddenly found himself caught in the midst of a fairy market on a seemingly deserted road,[52] or that the playwright William Shakespeare could imagine two pairs of young lovers stumbling on fairyland in the middle of the woods outside Athens. Vaguely envisioned somewhere in between the celestial heavens and the pit of hell, fairyland could be anywhere and everywhere—the guts of mountains, the middle of country roads, the mossy darkness of a dense forest.

Fairyland is typically reached either by going underground, underwater, or into the side of a hill or mountain. Time moves at an entirely different pace in fairyland than in the mortal realm: a merry dance that seems to last only a quarter of an hour can occupy a quarter of a century in human years and, conversely, a year passed caring for a fairy infant can be completed in the time needed to clear the tea table. Matters are seldom what they seem in fairyland. A room that looks sparse and plain can emerge as a dazzling spectacle of jewels and fine metals if the humans looking at it have their eyes anointed by the fairies. At times, however, fairy ointment produces the opposite effect and makes what had seemed a sumptuous palace appear to be a mean hovel.[53]

Fairy Ambiguity, Moral and Physical

In an essay devoted to the semantics of the word *fairy*, Noel Williams points out that ''defining a name that refers to nothing is a complex problem.'' Williams provides a full-page, three-column list of various permutations of the word *fairy*, noting so much variation is evident in the mere form of the word ''that one cannot define

that form absolutely. So the word itself is neither an object with clear boundaries nor possessed of a meaning with clear boundaries. Examination of this inherent vagueness and confusion is crucial to an understanding of the word, hence to the phenomena it is used to name.'' Williams ultimately concludes of the term *fairy*: ''As a word, it remains as ephemeral as the phenomena it names.''[54]

The ''vagueness and confusion'' inherent in the early modern sociocultural construction of the fairies in Britain make them fit guardians for the unruly theatrical characters into whose lives they intervene, whether that intervention is rendered explicit in the play or is simply suggested by means of cultural allusion. As Maureen Duffy notes: ''The concept of fayrie is expressing unconscious wishes that are usually kept repressed. If you indulge them, the stories say, you will never be the same again. . . . Using the convention of enchantment art, and it doesn't matter whether it is folk or sophisticated, allows unconscious material very free expression untrammelled by the apparatus of credibility. The convention supplies, instead, a framework in which the marvellous can happen, and traditional rules which are recognisable as part of everyone's experience.''[55] The fact of the matter is that fairy belief is not a part of everyone's experience today in the way that it was for early modern theatergoers. In order to understand what the numerous fairy plots and characters in this drama signify, we need to recreate as far as we are able the framework within which early modern playwrights placed these characters and their audiences watched them unfold.

Fairies are of such an indeterminate nature that it seems a fool's enterprise even to assert that they ''are'' ambiguous. David P. Young characterizes fairies as the embodiments of the volatile natural world in one of the first plays to come to mind when one mentions the sprites, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. His characterization of the sylvan scene in which the play's action unfolds is as applicable to the wood's supernatural inhabitants as it is to the forest itself: ''Spotted and inconstant, elusive as water, nature slides by us as we watch or read the play, and the familiar categories by which we judge experience waver, alter, merge, and separate again before our eyes in a 'languishing and wavering dance.' It is a vision of inconstancy, but a coherent one, something, as Hippolyta reminds us, of great constancy.''[56] One can no more commit fairies to paper in concrete specificity than one could take home a waterfall as a souvenir from a hike in the woods.

Yet, the fairies' labile natures also afford greater nuance to staged representations of them and their ever-changeable behavior. One aspect of life interrogated in plays that dramatize the fairies in some

way is the relegation of characters of low sociocultural status by virtue of gender and/or class to socially prescribed roles—conceptual boundaries over which fairies effortlessly sail. Peter G. Platt contends that wonder is ''the essential quality of aesthetic experience,'' adding that the theatrical experience is characterized by free play between the states of belief and unbelief: ''Of believing because the thing is seen to exist; and of not believing because it is sudden, new, and not before either known, thought, or believed able to exist.''[57] This tension is heightened when fairies are presented on the stage. They are ''known'' to exist in popular lore but portrayed by actors; they activate a whole host of beliefs about the things they are able to do by their mere presence but do not actually do them because the human limitations of those portraying them prevent it.

Victor Turner relates the Latin root for ambiguity directly to acting. He notes, ''The very word 'ambiguity' is derived from the Latin *agere* to 'act' for it comes from the verb *ambigere*, to 'wander,' *ambi*, 'about, around' + *agere*, 'to do,' resulting in the sense of having two or more possible meanings, 'moving from side to side,' 'of doubtful nature.' ''[58] The fairy presence in the early modern theater was a quite natural outgrowth of popular beliefs about them, which linked them to the ambiguous, metamorphic role playing of the actors who portrayed them on the stage. Fairies are actors in both senses of the word: they are doers, endlessly in motion, whether it be dancing, cleaning, milking cows, or scattering the contents of the coal hod across the clean kitchen floor. They are also masters of deception, able to adopt the roles of anything and everything from beautiful, beguiling maidens to the surliest and least tractable of infants.

Many early modern theatergoers considered it possible to interact with an otherworldly, fairy realm even as the characters that they watched on stage were supposed to do. Just as those characters found new ways of conducting key aspects of their daily lives—particularly their marital and domestic arrangements—under fairy influence, the audience members watching these plays might well have found in them new ideas about how to order theirs. Such an identification would have had particular resonance for the female members of the audience, since many of the most proactive heroines in these plays have it their way when they have it the fairy way. The complex of beliefs associated with fairy participation in household work activated a tension in socially constructed gender roles. The gender ambiguity of the fairies is manifested in part by the fact that their conduct does not serve as a clear index to their gender. Culturally, it is women who serve as midwives, search young brides to

determine their fertility at marriage, and play the ''gossips'' at infant baptisms in this period; however, the ''sprites'' believed to govern these and related actions (such as blessing bride beds and leaving women with changeling children) are not always gendered feminine in the popular imagination. Even when gendered (by virtue of names [i.e., Titania] or personal pronouns), fairies indiscriminately engage in activities socially ascribed to men or women specifically. Fairies are most often associated with domestic and agricultural work, but ''male'' sprites are as likely to be found in the pantry with the butter as in the barn with the plow. Fairy gender identities were, thus, highly ambiguous, but fairies were most often imagined engaging in tasks ascribed specifically to women in the early modern era, regardless of the moral valence attached to the acts.

In her excellent history of the fairies, Diane Purkiss underscores the lack of coherence between fairy conduct and fairy gender but allows the connection between the roles that fairies play and the people who play those roles in the mortal realm to cloud her judgment of the situation. She writes: ''A fairy is someone who appears at and governs one of the big crises of mortal life. . . . She presides over the borders of our lives, the seams between one phase of life and another. She attends christenings and stages funerals, organizes first party-dresses and lays dead kings to rest. (Note that I say she. Although male fairies can do these things, in mortal realms these tasks are women's work.)''[59]

However, this is precisely the point. Male fairies just might, in fact, do what mortal *women* do. If one takes Scot, Nashe, and Co., at their word and assigns such tales to female storytellers, it is not difficult to imagine why domestic drudgery is assigned more coequally across genders in fairyland than it is in the mortal realm. After a day of domestic labor, what better way to relax than concocting a whole world of creatures able to do your work with astonishing assiduousness, and in which the male of the species has to contend with the same tasks that occupy your days?

Puck is depicted as sweeping the dust behind the door at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* because the ''one item of his costume [that] never changed . . . was the broom or threshing flail which he habitually carried.'' Nothing pleases Puck more, Latham claims, than to make the morning fire, sweep the house, grind mustard and malt, draw water, and help the maids with breaking hemp, bolting and dressing flax, as well as spinning. Latham describes this as ''drudgery,'' but it is also all women's work.[60] Suzanne Hull offers a daunting list of the household and barnyard duties commonly ascribed to women in early modern England that echoes the tasks La-

tham attributes to Puck: ''She was in charge of housekeeping (cooking, cleaning, laundry), child care, brewing, distilling, cheese and butter making, care of barnyard animals, clothes making, kitchen gardening, and (in well-to-do, middle-class families) the supervision and training of a staff of workers. Not the least of her duties were the concoction and stocking of remedies for accidents and illness.''[61] In addition to his habitual association with household duties such as these, another aspect of Puck's popular persona that never changed was his ''male gender.'' Clearly the inhabitants of fairyland had no difficulty with a male maid. Neither, however, did the citizens of fairyland have any difficulty accepting a female fairy who could do the field work of seven men in a single night. Briggs recounts the tale of the ''Cairn Maiden,'' a fairy maiden who emerged from the cairn ''one hot harvest time when the corn grew thick in all the fields . . . and whatever field was ripe she would reap, and at night, between sunset and sunrise she would do the work of seven men.''[62] Fairyland is not the site of simple gender inversions—male fairies are just as likely to assist (or stymie) the work of male field hands as female fairies. Likewise, female fairies might just as well spend a night mischievously weaving a woman's loom into tangles as one of their male counterparts.

Addressing the double feminine valence of fairy lore as a belief system popularly attributed to women that dealt primarily with the household duties socially ascribed to women, Wendy Wall notes: ''The idea that serving women transmitted fairy stories was thus not the only domestic component to fairy fantasy, for their stories' most prominent characteristic was a deep interest in the details of household life. The *content* of fairy tales had a class and gender coding separate from their location in the mouths of nurses and buttery maids. As industrious workers, fairies did not simply constitute the ignorant belief system against which humanists liked to tilt, for they began to be associated with (even as they eroticized) the values of stewardship, diligence, and *oeconomia* so dear to the 'middling sort.' ''[63]

Thus, certain aspects of the fairy story *did* ''come true.'' Some of the values associated with fairy lore became the values of the larger society—particularly, ironically, the urban society where they were little more than stage fancies and the stuff of pamphlet narratives about successful city shills. The fact that fairy narratives that challenged patriarchal familial and governing structures did not catch on in the evolving early modern society does not make it any less a viable possibility that they might have, or that those who made up

and passed on those narratives were not capable of conceptualizing a society organized in their imagined, alternative fashion.

Fairy Liminality

Early modern Britons who countenanced fairy belief on some level accorded the spirits a respectful fear. Fairies earned a reputation as liminal figures by virtue of their association in the popular consciousness with life transitions. People were considered particularly vulnerable to the ambiguous influence of the fairies at transitional points in their life, such as birth, death, or periods of life alteration, such as marriage. Thus, not only did fairies supposedly exist on the border between the human realm and that of the supernatural, but they were also alternately figured as protecting or attacking those who enter liminal zones. As Diane Purkiss notes, fairies "are encountered on boundaries either in space—between town and wilderness—or in time—at midday, at midnight, at the change of the year, on the eve of a feast, on Hallowe'en or May Eve, in a festive space marked out from normal life, like Yule, or the "reathes of the year."[64] Such a liminal space could be "literal," such as the fairy wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or symbolic, such as the liminal zone of the wedding day, with all of its cross-cultural emphasis on the literal threshold of the newly created domestic unit.[65]

Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford note the significance of women's habitual occupation of liminal household spaces, such as the threshold: "Both the flexibility and liminal ambiguity of feminized household boundaries were embodied in women's habit of posting themselves at their doorsteps. . . . The liminal stance of the doorway connected women in their economic role as overseers of the household to their social role as participants in village life. At her doorstep, a woman was technically within the bounds of her home without being enclosed within its walls."[66] Themselves habitants of domestic borderlines, early modern women, not surprisingly, came to be linked to tales of household guardians most at home when not quite at home, safest when least contained. As the liminal fairies, women on doorsteps were potential troublemakers, too. From such a vantage point they could both see and be seen, listen and learn, form and, perhaps, offer judgments. They could not be chided home: technically, they were at home. But from such a post, a woman might do much.

Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred suggests, "As an in-between, transi-

tional period, liminality may be considered in terms of 'social imbalance.' "[67] As a number of scholars have noted, early modern Britain experienced a lengthy period of social imbalance, as a variety of cultural shifts took place: religious reform, growing reliance on merchant culture increasingly located in evolving urban centers as opposed to village agrarian culture, and tremendous tension in the long-standing class hierarchy, including conflicting notions of the roles to be played by women.[68] The unruly women characters in early modern drama often engage in behavior that clashes with the prevailing sociocultural characterization of women, revealing a fissure in the social construction of their roles—a gap between socially prescribed, expected conduct and their "actual" conduct. Fairy behavior existed in just such a fissure in society's facade, forming a link between the spirited fairy eruptions in early modern plays and the actions of the socially deviant characters whose questionable conduct the fairies enthusiastically support. Particularly interesting are the iterations of this formula that rely on female characters who impersonate fairy characters, such as Ann Page in *Merry Wives of Windsor* or Dol Common in *The Alchemist.* More interesting still are those plays in which no fairy characters of any kind appear, when the mere invocation of narratives with fairy resonance provides an implicit defense of female conduct that would otherwise be socially unacceptable.

In addition to all of the other changes that attended early modern British society, a transition in the reception of fairies occurred in the early modern period, in Robert Weimann's construction:

> It was in this highly transitional situation, when the new natural philosophy and corresponding attitudes in the reformed church had unsettled the previous social functions of these superstitions without quite extinguishing their traditional fascination, that the fantastic products of the popular imagination were able to make the transition from an oral tradition to a fully literary and dramatic one. Under these conditions the general revival of interest in classical mythology—primarily the result of translations starting about 1553—made it easier for popular pamphleteers and dramatists to raise folklore from the threat of extinction and the stigma of possible heresy to national popularity in what has since been judged "our great period of fairy literature."[69]

The great period of literature devoted to fairies, those creatures of boundaries and in-between states, occurred, significantly, during just such a border time, politically, socially, and religiously, in English culture. Given the prevalence of fairy characters and references to fairy beliefs in early modern plays, it is high time that an

effort be made to understand their significance. Perhaps it is time, in fact, for our great period of fairy literary criticism.

Fairies, Women, and the Working Classes

Arguing the case for fairy lore's cultural significance, Katherine Briggs notes that, beginning in the late Elizabethan period and extending to the English Civil War in the middle of the seventeenth century, "The fairies came in for discussion with everything else, and the shift of opinion about them is a subtle thermometer of the temper of the times. Socially the new treatment of the fairies is a small symptom of the growing influence of the yeoman class in literature."[70] The increased involvement of the "yeoman class" in literature generated greater attention to issues of concern among the laboring classes and the impoverished. In many plays, these concerns are depicted (and, at times, deflected) through fairy plots. Many of the household chores that fairies are imagined to do align them with one of the lowest social classes—female domestic servants. However, fairies are not controlled by mortal masters but, rather, have the power to careen through human lives wreaking havoc or granting favors at will. They are subject to no reprisals (such as corporal punishment or withheld wages) if they do not perform household duties well. Thus, they adhere to neither gender nor class codes, although they perform tasks and possess role-based identities that are accounted for in such structures. They are creatures liberated from the strictures of class and gender; theatrical depictions or tales of their antics could, therefore, have been liberatory for the members of the working classes and women long confined to particular social positions and the conduct considered appropriate to them. The theatrical and popular discourses about fairies presented creatures that both were and were not like the domestic workers whose daily work they mimicked. It is in the gap between their similarities to their human counterparts and their differences from them that fairy characters suggest alternatives to sociocultural norms.

Social status positions generally were in a state of flux at this time as new forms of employment and means of class mobility began to present themselves. Both women and the fairies with which they were associated as tellers of and central characters in popular tales inhabited a fraught sociocultural space; no firm decisions had, as yet, been taken with respect to how to regard and treat them. Fear is largely a product of such a lack of understanding, and the force

of fear confers power. In some measure, the fears of those who opposed the perceived immorality and decadence of the theater empowered that medium to influence the thousands of people who went in droves to the plays. Fairy beliefs, too, conjured the fearsome spectacles of work completed as if by magic, of female sexuality unleashed from the confines of the marital unit, of a world where time, death, and moral responsibility ceased to have force or meaning.

During early modern England's complex power struggle between cultural and institutional beliefs, fear of the power of fear, paradoxically, motivated a sustained assault on popular beliefs, such as those in fairies. Stuart Clark explains that " 'Superstition' is one of the key concepts in the history of early modern culture" since "it defined what religious reformation, seen in the broadest moral terms, was actually about" in its status as "the most serious (often *the* most serious) of religious transgressions." Further, Clark contends, "the concept of superstition was a cultural weapon directed by churchmen mainly at the populace at large (although also at their clerical competitors). It was a form of proscription in terms of which many of the routine material practices of pre-industrial, rural cultures, together with the categories and beliefs that shaped ordinary people's experience, were denounced as valueless."[71] Ultimately, superstitions such as fairy belief offered a context for castigating other religions, such as Catholicism, too.

Inveighed against as the "Whore of Babylon," Catholicism as an institution came to be feminized in early modern popular culture.[72] The same held true for the set of superstitions closely aligned with "the old faith," fairy beliefs. Reginald Scot contends that "these bugs speciallie are spied and feared of sicke folke, children, women and cowards," identifying beliefs in every spirit from the fairy queen to the devil himself as the tales with which "in our childhood our mothers maids have so terrified us."[73] Despite his lack of faith in the tales themselves, Scot paints a vivid portrait of members of the female serving class using such lore to wield authority over naughty children.[74] The stories surrounding fairy doings and the effect that they had on humans provided more than bedtime threats. They also offered explanations for life events ranging from fetal deformations to prolonged absences of a woman from her husband's home. The consistency of such beliefs across chronological and geographical boundaries testifies to the specific freedoms for which the early modern second- (and third-, and so on) class citizens who dreamed them up and passed them on thirsted. It also, as Diane Purkiss points out, potentially offered a way to keep women and members of the working classes in thrall to their own superstitions and to the

nonbelievers willing to use them to advantage. Purkiss argues that if fairies can be seen as subversive figures, they can equally well be seen "as a means not of breaking rules, but of making rules, particularly for women, and this too is seized on eagerly by an élite eager to get their money's worth out of their servants."[75]

As Mary Ellen Lamb notes, however, this cultural weapon could be wielded to quite different effect when wrested back from churchmen and other arbiters of social mores. Lamb notes the affinities of fairy beliefs of this period to James C. Scott's model of class resistance as delineated in *Weapons of the Weak*: "such practices, designed to provide remedies outside established institutions such as law courts or churches, belonged to the groups whose interests were least often addressed by hierarchical authority—those of lower economic status or, interestingly, women of any economic status."[76] Fairies conduct themselves in a range of ways with respect to the disempowered, but time and again they are imagined as helping those in need: as scapegoats for problems in workplace, family, and household, and as ethereal lottery tickets, passports to vast sums of wealth for no greater labor than sex with the fairy queen, or participation in a raucous fairy revel—almost, in fact, like being a member of the leisure class. It is the potential power of the weapon of fairy belief with which I will be concerned here, whether wielded by "actual" early modern women or by the female characters created by male playwrights.

Patricia Crawford helpfully links the work done by women and the development of popular beliefs about supernatural figures including fairies. She notes, "If a woman performed her tasks with reference to magical beliefs, she helped to protect her household from malign supernatural forces."[77] The obverse of Crawford's final observation is equally valid: if a woman failed to do her household tasks effectively, she could blame the negative consequences (i.e., runny cheese, lumpy butter) on the fairies. Although it is true that men like the antiquarian John Brand and the early modern writers Reginald Scot and Thomas Nashe use the association of women with fairy belief to demean women, such narratives could actually serve to empower their transmitters. As Lamb points out, "there is still no doubt that some early modern adults 'believed' in fairies" and not all of them were women.[78] If such tales could be used to wield power over gullible children, they also seem, at times, to have been effective with husbands, neighbors, and even judges and juries in village courts. As we shall see, the subversive role played by fairies acting in concert with some of the early modern stage's most sensationally unruly women suggests not only that fairy beliefs possessed potent

cultural force, but that this force proved most beneficial for women. Fairies authorize unruliness and, as such, are the guardians of many varieties of social dissent and resistance to hegemony in early modern Britain.

Fairy Theatricality

Like fairy space, theatrical space in early modern London stood outside the bounds of daily, routine existence (literally, as Steven Mullaney notes, in its position in the Liberties).[79] Wendy Wall eloquently describes the significance fairy lore had for the early modern theatergoing population. She contends:

> Fairylore consistently occupied different sites within the culture—as "popular" knowledge claimed by lower and middling-class people who defined themselves against aristocratic finery, but also as the concern of courtiers who assimilated the belief systems they rejected as part of their status identifications. Because fairy discourse cut across class lines its reputed and intertwined class assignments (rather than its "true" class positions) should be the object of our inquiry. Fairy belief was not the province of one specific social group but served as a discursive field that could be activated in diverse ways to produce alliances and stratifications. . . . As an institution catering to multiple social groups, the London stage presents a particularly interesting site for looking at how fairy discourse was taken up by different constituencies in early modern England.[80]

In the Elizabethan and Jacobean theater, these constituencies included aristocrats, tradespeople, agricultural workers gone to London to conduct business or, alternately, able to see the traveling players in their own villages. It also included prostitutes plying their trade and urban crooks on the make, perhaps either seeing familiar exploits staged, as in Jonson's clear employment of popular modes of urban fraud in *The Alchemist*, or even, to the antitheatricalists' chagrin, treating such reenactments of successful cons as a criminological primer.

The players traveled through rural areas, too, and the citizens of the rural landscape staged in plays such as *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, the subject of chapter two, traveled to London to conduct business from time to time. They might have entertained themselves during their sojourn in the city by taking in a play. If they did, and if it chanced to have fairies in it, they likely responded to seeing boy actors portraying fairies on the stage just as they did to seeing them

play queens. Both representations were perceived as forgeries of the real. Alan Sinfield's assessment of witchcraft belief on the stage can be applied to the depiction of fairies there: "In a society where witchcraft is generally credited, the appearance in a play of personages who say and do witchlike things must, in the absence of some counter-indication, be taken as meaning, not 'abstractions,' but *witches*."[81] Likewise, in a society where fairies were believed to be capable of stealing infants from cradles and wives from childbed, the appearance of characters who said and did fairylike things would suggest to the audience not airy nothings, but real creatures with a local habitation and a name. Shakespeare and his contemporaries—even Ben Jonson, his assiduous self-promotion to the literati notwithstanding—wrote not only for an educated, court audience, but also for a popular audience entertained by ballads and folktales about creatures whose existence was a received belief. We need to become as well versed in fairy belief as we are in classical myth and Christian belief in order to appreciate fully what early modern Britons saw when they watched fairies flit across the stage.[82] In the following chapters, I examine how shifts in religious belief, marital norms, pregnancy, childbirth and infant care, and domestic life are reflected in dramatic representations of fairies and women and fairy women, whether they be fairy queens like Shakespeare's Titania or women like the Mistresses Ford and Page who disguise themselves as fairies. At this point I will outline the specific aspects of fairy belief of greatest relevance for the four following chapters.

Changeling Lore

One of the most common pieces of fairy lore concerns *changelings*, a term most often reserved for human infants switched in their cradle with fairy offspring. *Changeling* can also refer to the fairy replacement for a human baby and was used at times in early modern culture to refer more generally to one posing as or taken to be someone else.[83] The popularity of changeling lore is reflected in early modern drama: each of the plays that I will be discussing employs it in some way, most often to highlight a particular character's marginality. As late as 1632, Peter Hausted invoked the lore in a play staged before the King and Queen on a visit to Cambridge. In the dramatis personae, we learn that "Sacriledge Hooke, a Simoniacall Patrone" has a "supposed Daughter, deformed and foolish," later characterized in the play as "Sweete Mistris *Vrsly* (who without all question / Was *Kitlin* to *Nib*, o'th *Queene* of *Fairies Kitchin*, / Sent to your Vncle

for a *Newyeeres gift* / vpon exchange by the *Elfe*).''[84] Given the fact that her dowry will be the living at a parsonage, the fairy connection to religion is apparent once again. Both mother and infant were believed to be vulnerable to fairies immediately after childbirth. Christian doctrine held that new mothers were in a precarious spiritual state from the time they gave birth until they had been ritually purified. Changeling belief suggests once again the association of fairies with purgatory, since in Catholic belief unchristened infants who died were believed to be consigned to spiritual limbo. As Katharine Briggs notes, ''next to unchristened children, nursing mothers who had not yet been churched were in the greatest danger'' of being whisked away by the fairies, often to nurse fairy infants.[85]

Lewis Spence recounts the tradition that the future King Charles I of England was just such a peevish child as changeling children were often held to be, tracing the origins of his temper back to an incident during his infancy at Dunfermline Palace. King James was allegedly awakened from sleep one night by a cry from the night nurse attendant on the infant Charles. When he went to see what was the matter, the old woman reputedly told him that ''there was one like an auld man came into the room and threw his cloak owre the prince's cradle and syne drew it till him again, as if he had taken cradle, bairn and a' away wi' him. I'm feared it was the thing that's no canny.''[86] Spence, as James himself likely did, dismisses the woman's fears as idle, nighttime imagination. Still, it is amusing to discover that the king whose head would roll into history as the harbinger of the Civil War was thought to be a changeling, because his own son would be cheered back to the throne by Royalist pamphleteers writing under fairy pseudonyms.[87]

Susan Schoon Eberly discusses the possibility that changeling lore evolved to provide an explanation for various, specific malformations and disorders suffered by infants and young children. Her explanation suggests another connection among dead infants, fairy lore, and Christian belief in purgatory. Eberly notes that ''when an infant died before it had gained full entry into the human race through rituals of naming and baptism, it might in folk belief be transformed into a species of fairy known variously as pixie, Will-O-the-Wisp, Spunky, Taran, or Short Hoggers—little fay folk associated with mysterious, flickering lights and with lonely, out of the way places.''[88] This conception of the unchristened infant's soul's being released into a liminal spiritual space is simply a pagan, fairy-affiliated version of the Catholic understanding of what happened to babies who died before they could be baptized. Conversely, Reformation theologians including John Calvin and William Tyndale

claimed that the souls of unbaptized infants were not in jeopardy, a teaching on which James I relied in forbidding midwives to baptize newborns considered likely to die.[89]

Although there is no surviving evidence that infanticide resulted from a changeling ''test,'' Wirt Sikes notes the murderous intent of such trials, linking them to witchcraft practice: ''the creed of ignorance everywhere as regards changelings is a very cruel one, and reminds us of the tests of the witchcraft trials. Under the pretence of proving whether the objectionable baby is a changeling or not, it is held on a shovel over the fire, or it is bathed in a solution of the foxglove, which kills it.'' Forging yet again the almost rote connection between Catholicism and fairy belief, Sikes recounts the story of a mother who received direction from the Virgin Mary on how to make the fairies who had switched her child for one of their own return her baby to her.[90] Given the cruel means used to make such a switch, this story suggests a pernicious association between infanticidal fairy lore and Catholicism.

Mothers tried a number of methods to prevent the theft of their infants by the fairies, and many of these are reminiscent of efforts to ward off demonic forces: ''Certain objects, scissors, knives, or nails, plants like rowan and garlic, charms like the cross, the Bible, or holy water placed near the child were believed to be effective.''[91] The depth of early modern belief in evil forces meant that community sympathy would often be with a mother who lost a child to ''the fairies'' if her neighbors knew that she had tried to protect it. Fairy lore thus provided an alibi for women who rebelled against their socially scripted roles as wives and mothers. Rather than blaming the mother of an infant who died prematurely or who suffered from some congenital ailment or deformity, much changeling belief cast the mother as the victim of either her supernaturally abhorrent infant or the malicious spirits who had cursed or switched it. Likewise, given the second meaning of the term *changeling,* as any substitute for another person,[92] a woman who inexplicably disappeared from her husband's home for a lengthy period could account for her absence with tales of fairy abduction if she so chose. Often in such cases something approximating the dead body of the missing person would be left by the fairies in its stead. Those taken by the fairies were commonly believed to be dead until they shocked their community by returning from fairyland as abruptly as they had been taken to it.[93] Often years had gone by in their absence. A woman abducted by the fairies might return with children gifted with mysterious talents in tow, or her return might precipitate the emergence of skills—particularly medical or musical—in the children she had

left behind as a compensatory gift from the fairies for taking their mother from them.[94] Froward wives were at times considered changelings much as fussy infants were. As I demonstrate in chapter five, there are a sufficient number of cases on record of people who did make such fairy excuses for their aberrant behavior to suggest that at least some early modern Britons employed this sort of tale to escape punishment for a whole range of socially deviant acts including exhibiting sexual licentiousness, practicing healing arts, and making seditious religiopolitical prophecies.

The officious feuding of Oberon and Titania over possession of the young Indian boy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, discussed in chapter one, suggests the esteem with which human infants were regarded in fairyland. Oberon, in his turn, provides his wife with a bestial changeling lover in a crude attempt to usurp the changeling boy from her. Ben Jonson is up to his usual satirical tricks in the subject of chapter three, *The Alchemist*, representing the poor fool, Dapper, as flattered by the news that he was left by the fairies at birth. Given the specific beliefs about changelings discussed previously, this is, rather, an insult of the highest order.

One of the most ingenious early modern theatrical renderings of changeling lore is the plot device of the bed trick. As does much fairy lore surrounding changelings, the bed trick has affinities with witch belief, particularly the sexual manipulations of incubi and succubi. However, because the proof of the trick typically lies in the womb, plays featuring a bed trick also ultimately present the tricked man with an unlooked-for child of unexpected origin, much like the changeling surprise early modern families feared finding in their cradle. The trick typically hinges on the substitution of one sexual partner for another; as I have already established, in early modern usage, *changeling* could have the more general meaning of "substitute." In light of their witchcraft connections and demonic associations, such tricks are particularly surprising when they are successfully employed by a woman who emerges as the heroine of the drama, such as Helena in *All's Well That Ends Well*. Helena's case, the subject of chapter five, is an especially intriguing one since her story has links to a variety of fairy beliefs, including fairies' presumptive superior knowledge of healing arts and the legend of the fairy bride, to which I will turn next.

The Fairy Bride

Although there is a great deal of variation in the details of the fairy bride plot, the central elements in the tale as Juliette Wood and

Katharine Briggs recount it are consistent across geographical and chronological cultural boundaries. Although she focuses her analysis on the complexities of the Welsh tradition, Wood notes, "About three dozen variants of the tale dating from the tenth to the twentieth century are known, and the very fact that the tale has attained such a curious, almost icon-like status, tells us much about perceptions of Welsh tradition *in and outside Wales*."[95] In the fairy bride tradition, a mortal man acquires a fairy bride by using deception to learn a secret about her. This secret is quite often her name, since human knowledge of fairy names is widely believed to confer power over them.[96] There are two key variants in the myth explaining how the mortal husband initially gains power over his supernatural wife: he might gain "possession of some object such as an item of clothing" or learn a secret about her. The Fairy Bride often has an impressive dowry, such as fairy cattle that yield tremendous amounts of milk but eat very little, and often gifts her spouse with a treasure he is supposed to keep at all costs. As Wood notes, in the mortal/fairy union, "wealth and prosperity are dependent on the wife."[97]

The virtually universal aspect of the Fairy Bride tradition is the supernatural bride's imposition of taboos on the mortal spouse. There are typically three, and they usually include injunctions against touching the fairy bride with steel, iron, or clay; feeding her mortal food; or striking her.[98] If he breaks the taboos, his power to hold her in the human realm is invalidated and she is free to return to fairyland. Often, however, the mortal so genuinely laments her loss that the fairy spouse agrees to return to him, though she usually returns without any of her previous fairy gifts. The fairy bride need not ever return to her abusive spouse and only does so when he has manifested sufficient contrition to make it clear that such an incident will not recur. Both *Cymbeline*, discussed in chapter four, and *All's Well* have several plot links to fairy bride lore with important variations. In *Cymbeline*, for example, the violation of taboos complicates Posthumus's loss of his fairy-linked bride Imogen rather than causing it, while in *All's Well* both Bertram and his unwanted bride, Helena—who exhibits fairy attributes—impose conditions on the union.

Fairy Healing Arts

John Webster reports that one Jacob Behmen was apprehended on a charge of witchcraft for performing "'cures beyond the ordinary reasons and deductions of our usual practitioners.' . . . What

this man did was with a white powder which, he said, he received from the Fairies.'' Webster's account was published in *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* in London, 1677, but the events recounted occurred five decades before, in the 1620s. Behmen was linked by virtue of class to the people who typically derived the most personal benefit in fairy lore, the underprivileged. Webster goes on to emphasize the class issues at work in his narrative; on the basis of his healing arts, Behmen was able to improve his financial position. Webster observes that Behmen ''was a very simple and illiterate person to any mans judgment, and had been formerly very poor, but had gotten some pretty little meanes to maintain himself, his Wife and diverse small children, by his cures done with this white powder.'' Behmen received no punishment from the courts sterner than mean-spirited ridicule. Asserting his unique personal authority to discuss Behman's case, Wesbter recalls, ''I remember the Judge said, when all the evidence was heard, that if he were to assign his punishment, he should be whipped from thence to Fairyhall.''[99] A jocular (if painful) punishment, for a noncrime.

A number of the early modern witchcraft accusations that I discuss in the introductions to each of the following chapters involve these same elements: lower-class, uneducated people (usually women, Behmen's case notwithstanding) who have been practicing healing arts that they claim to have derived from the fairies. I include *All's Well That Ends Well* in this group because Helena has a remarkable degree of affinity with the early modern sociocultural stereotypes of the witch for a comedic heroine, ''problem comedy'' or no. She practices quasi-miraculous healing arts of ambiguous origin on a king; she pursues the man of her choice in defiance of gender-based customs governing propriety, class norms, and his own preferences; and, finally, she fakes her own death while on a feigned pilgrimage to a religious shrine that actually serves as cover for a covert operation in which she beds the unwitting hero. The play directs the audience to disregard the obvious consistency between these actions and witchcraft practice. I maintain that Shakespeare is able to walk this fine line by imbuing the play with fairy lore.

Richard Jenkins notes, ''Wise women, fairy doctors and other medical or ritual specialists were also commonly regarded as having been away with the gentry. This was not only believed by their clients but was also often a claim of the practitioner concerned.''[100] Such a claim was good for business because fairies were renowned for their magical healing abilities. Fairy food was such a potent preservative that mortals who once ate it would be trapped in fairyland forever, unable to die so long as they continued to eat it and unable to live

without it. Fairies would often heal a mortal who did them good of ailments ranging from rheumatism to the gout. However, a mortal who gained too much knowledge of fairy secrets might be blinded in revenge. One man, however, managed to leave fairyland after both imbibing fairy libations and stealing the cup from which he drank. According to the story from the Isle of Man, a man taken by the fairies to a revel is warned by someone trapped there not to eat or drink. He is handed a silver cup and surreptitiously pours out its contents; when the fairy revels cease, the cup remains in his hand: ''He went the next day and communicated to the minister of the parish all that had happened, and asked his advice how he should dispose of the cup, to which the parson reply'd, he could not do better than to devote it to the service of the church, and this very cup, they tell me, is that which is now used for the consecrated wine in Kirk Merlugh—now *Kirk Malew*.''[101] A former fairy cup, turned to service as a chalice. This takes us to one of the oddest aspects of early modern fairy belief, the notion that fairies professed Catholicism.

Catholic Fairies

Sir Walter Scott links the desecration of the cult of faery to sixteenth-century religious reform. He asserts that ''in the time of Queen Elizabeth the unceasing labour of many and popular preachers, who declaimed against the 'splendid miracles' of the Church of Rome, produced also its natural effect on the other stock of superstitions,'' including the splendors of fairyland.[102] Scott had numerous early modern authorities to draw upon in making this claim. In his *Daemonologie*, James I draws a stunning comparison between the fairy capacity to ''contract a solide bodie within so little roome''—a nutshell, perhaps—to the Catholic belief in transubstantiation.[103] Such associations pervaded early modern culture, and were by no means confined to the court. So, for example, in 1612, William Warner included a poem in *Albion's England*, a bizarre compendium of British history and original poetry, in which a shepherd tending his flock slides into a liminal state ''twixt sleepe and waking'' when, ''though he wakt he slept'' and sees the fairies dancing. He chances to hear Robin Goodfellow address some intriguing religious commentary to the assembled fairies:

> Poore *Robin-good-fellow*, sweet Elfs, much thanks you for this glee,
> Since last I came into this Land a Raritie to see:
> When Nunnes, Monks, Friers, and Votaries were here of every sort,

> We were accustomed, ye wot, to this and merrier sport. . . .
> Was then a merry world with vs when *Mary* wore the Crowne,
> And holy-water-sprinkle was beleeud to put us downe. . . .
> Yet largelier than most statesmen know, heere could I sport long while,
> Insociable is not, ywis, for Catholicks this Ile.[104]

As Puck thrives, so thrive the papists. This association between fairies and Catholicism persisted into the Jacobean period, as the fairy theatrical confections John Lyly wrote for Paul's Boys gave way to Shakespeare and Jonson's representations of mischief-making fairies with controversial religious signification. As I will demonstrate, it seems quite likely that they and their fellow playwrights (such as John Fletcher) who invoked fairies relied on the potentially problematic import of sprites associated with everything from dodging household duties, to dabbling in illicit sex, to lapsing into the old faith.

Even after both Shakespeare and Jonson had stopped writing for the stage (but while their plays continued to appear there), this complex of associations linking fairies to Catholicism continued unabated. So, for example, in 1628, Robert Herrick published a poem called ''The Fairie Temple'' that linked the fairies directly to the papacy. First, the poem establishes a direct connection between the diminutiveness of fairies and the physical trappings of Catholicism, and references, for instance, ''curious copes and surplices / Of cleanest cob-web.'' Driving this connection home, Herrick next links the popular notion of the fairy proclivity for cleanliness directly to a Christian tradition aligned with Catholicism:

> They have their ash-pans and their brooms
> To purge the chappel and the rooms;
> Their many mumbling masse-priests here,
> And many a dapper chorister.
> Their ush'ring vergers here likewise;
> Their canons and their chaunteries;
> Of cloyster-monks they have enow,
> I, and their abby-lubbers too.

Fairyland is rendered a virtual recusant outpost here, seemingly crammed with every variety of papist at every level of the Roman hierarchy. Finally, Herrick goes right for the jugular: fairies ''much affect the papacie,'' and it presumably has room for them, too: ''since the last is dead, there's hope / Elve Boniface shall next be pope.''[105] Fairy characteristics such as diminutiveness (cleanliness, the dapper choristers' and the masse-priests' cobweb surplices) are blended here with all of the trappings of ''popery'' from which the reform

Christian sects sought to distinguish themselves, including monasticism and the papacy itself. Herrick, who served as vicar of Dean Prior in Devonshire, was a devout Anglican and a staunch Royalist. The latter affiliation might well have driven him to write about fairies in a different key once the Puritans who had always dominated the portion of the West Country in which Herrick served rose to actual parliamentary power in the 1640s and expelled Herrick and Royalist ministers like him from their parishes. By that time, it had become common for Royalists to express their political views from behind the thin veil of fairy pseudonyms such as Robin Goodfellow. The fairy-Catholic/Protestant divide of this period metamorphosed into the fairy-Royalist/Parliamentarian divide by the Civil War period as the religious sects and their associated political positions fractured into a panoply of warring factions. Anti-Catholic sentiment was forced out of the spotlight as new religiopolitical camps fought for center stage.

But my tale lies not that way. Now that you have been provided with program notes and the scene, nothing remains but to direct your attention to the stage, where perhaps the best known of the fairy plays, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, is about to begin. Of all of the fairies in the early modern theatrical corpus, Puck, Titania, and Oberon are likely the most universally familiar. And yet, as I will show you, we hardly know them at all. As a consequence, we have been but poorly acquainted with the prime beneficiary of their fairy magic, Helena, heretofore as well. So, ''Come, now a roundel and a fairy song'' (*MND* II.ii.1).

1

''The Story Shall Be Changed'': The Fairy Feminism of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*

In early November 1576, Bessie Dunlop of Lyne in Ayrshire was ''conuict, and byrnt'' for witchcraft. The introduction to her testimony charges, ''Dilatit of the vsing of Sorcerie, Witchcraft, and Incantatioune, with Inovcatioun of spretis of the devill . . . deling with charmes, and abusing the peple with devillisch craft of sorcerie forsaid.''[1] One of the principal spirits of the devil with whom Dunlop associated was the Fairy Queen, or ''Queen of Elfame,'' as Dunlop refers to her. As were most of the other women whose cases I will discuss over the course of this book, Dunlop was married—to one ''Andro Jak,'' according to Pitcairn's record of her deposition, a character curiously absent from her story.

In her testimony, Dunlop claims to have made the acquaintance of the Queen of Elfame[2] shortly before befriending the ghost of Thom Reid, a soldier who had been killed in battle at the Field of Pinkie twenty-nine years before. Living out the narrative of liminality that was popularly believed to govern supernatural interactions, Dunlop reports that she first encountered Reid ''as sche was gangand betuix hir awin hous and the yard of Monkcastell'' when she herself was ''new rissine out of gissane [childbed].''[3] Christian doctrine held that new mothers were vulnerable to spiritual assault from the time they gave birth until they had been ritually purified. Katherine Briggs notes, ''Nursing mothers who had not yet been churched were in the greatest danger'' of being abducted by fairies.[4] According to her own account, Dunlop first met the Queen of Elfame when actually confined to childbed.

Asked, ''Gif sche neuir askit the questioun at him, Quhairfoir he com to hir mair (than) to ane vthir bodye?''[5] Dunlop replies: ''Remembring hir, quhen sche was lyand in chyld-bed-lair . . . ane stout woman com in to hir, and sat doun on the forme besyde hir, and askit ane drink at hir, and sche gaif hir; quha alsua tauld hir, that that barne wald de, and that hir husband suld mend of his seiknes.

The said Bessie ansuerit, that sche remembrit wele thairof; and Thom said, That was the Quene of Elfame his mistres, quha had commandit him to wait vpoun hir, and to do hir gude."[6] So, the Queen of Elfame not only visited Dunlop while she was in childbed, but also appointed Thom Reid as her "guardian."

Reid apparently took his duties as Dunlop's spiritual guardian as seriously as he took his devotion to his mistress, the Queen of Elfame. He greets Dunlop with a devout "Sancta Marie"[7] and by Bessie's own admission he shared his politicoreligious views with her. These views are consistent with the tendency, increasingly common over the period of Protestant religious reform, to link the fairies with "the auld ffayth." At the end of Dunlop's testimony, she is "interrogat, Quhat sche thocht of the new law? Ansuerit, That sche had spokin with Thom about that mater; bot Thom ansuerit, That this new law was nocht gude; and that the auld ffayth suld sum hame agane, but nocht sic as it was befoir."[8] In a footnote, Pitcairn identifies the "new law" as "The Reformed Religion."[9] As Sir Walter Scott notes in his account of the Dunlop case, "In his theological opinions, Mr. Reid appeared to lean to the Church of Rome, which, indeed, was most indulgent to the fairy folk."[10] Keeping the faith for fairies and their followers meant clinging to tenets Dunlop's interrogators had ceased to find compatible with "true" religious devotion.

It is from Reid rather than from the Queen of Elfame herself that Dunlop acquires the information and remedies she uses to help people. Early in the deposition, Dunlop is asked, "Gif sche had socht ony thing at Thom to help hir self, or ony vthir with?" She "Ansuerit, That quhen sundrie persounes cam to hir to seik help . . . Thom gaif her, out of his awin hand, ane thing lyke the rute of ane beit, and baid hir . . . dry it, and mak pulder of it, and gif it to seik persounes, and thai suld mend."[11] Although it may seem to be hair-splitting, in subsequent cases that I will discuss in which the accused parties were acquitted, healing powders such as those that Dunlop describes are received directly from the fairies, and not an intermediary "ghost" such as Tom Reid. His role as remedy-bearing shuttlecock betwixt and between Dunlop and Reid's fairy mistress seems to be one of the damning factors in the Dunlop case. Reid's role also raises both class and gender issues that, as we will see, constitute persistent aspects of fairy narratives: Reid, a male and a soldier (albeit the ghost of one), serves Dunlop, a poor peasant woman, superseding normative class and gender boundaries. The advice that he gives facilitates the improvement of the financial situation of Dunlop and her invalid husband, but it also makes her a mouthpiece for reactionary religious views in a period of contested reform.[12]

There is one other significant aspect to Dunlop's deposition that recurs consistently in the extant testimony of those who professed to gain knowledge and healing powers from the fairies, and that is the parade of nobility who, she reports, sought out her aid. Ratting out the social superiors on whose behalf she has asked Tom Reid's advice, Dunlop testifies that "The Ladye Thridpairt, in the barronye of Renfrew," sent to her to know who had stolen money from her purse. Within ten days, Dunlop had an answer for her "eftir sche had spokin with Thom." Then, "James Cwinghame, chalmerlane of Kilwinning, come to hir about sum beir that was stollin furth of the barne," and "The Ladye Blaire sundrie tymes had spokin with her" about a virtual bridal registry of household linens, plate, and clothing that had disappeared from the house. She had taxed her servants with accusations and punishments to no avail, only to discover that "Margaret Symple, hir awin friend," had stolen them once Dunlop asked Reid to look into the matter.[13] Although Scottish law identified both the practice of witchcraft and private recourse to the practitioners of it as capital crimes, there is no evidence that the Lady Thridpairt, James Cunningham, or the Lady Blair joined Bessie Dunlop when she was burned at the stake.

Fairy beliefs were part of an oral tradition largely attributed to and preserved by women, whether in witchcraft depositions or in fireside tales. In early modern Britain, women especially were considered vulnerable to the possibly benevolent, possibly pernicious influence of the fairies at transitional points in their life, such as birth, death, or periods of life alteration, such as marriage. So, for example, the tradition of carrying the bride across the threshold on her wedding day was related to fairy superstition. This association of the fairies with the threshold of the house and the threshold of a woman's life as girl/daughter and woman/wife points to a central characteristic of the fairies: they are liminal figures.[14] Not only do they exist on the border between the human realm and that of the supernatural, but they are also alternately figured as protecting or attacking those who enter liminal zones, whether it be the "literal" liminal zone of the fairy wood outside Athens in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or the symbolic liminal zone of the birthing chamber. Bessie Dunlop's tale is in many ways the inverse of the lyrical narrative Titania relates about the death of her Indian votaress and the fairy queen's acquisition of her beautiful son.[15] As I will demonstrate, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* would likely have played very differently before an early modern audience familiar with an omnipotent fairy queen who held mortal men as sexual hostages, abducted human babies, and sometimes graced her mortal devotees with healing arts or powers of divina-

tion.[16] Although Titania is drugged for the duration of the play's action, woman's power pervades the play. As soon as he has dispensed with his utterly ungovernable wife, after all, Oberon places himself at the disposal of the desperately lovelorn Helena, chasing the object of her desire through the fairy wood with no mortal guardian in sight. As we shall see, fairies, unruly women, and open confrontation with reformed religious practice form a consistent triad in early modern British drama.

The women who are aligned with the fairies in early modern plays are linked with them in liminality: they engage in socially aberrant behavior but are not subject to the harsh reprisals that might otherwise result from their conduct. Fairy lore and the liberties accorded its airy subjects opened a "free zone" for women who rebelled against social norms for dutiful daughters and properly reticent maidens. Lore regarding fairy guardianship over true love matches, for example, provided a sociocultural safety net for women who successfully defied patriarchal laws governing whom they married and how the marital arrangements were made. Characters such as Helena and Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are thwarted in their bold attempts to secure the spouse of their choice in defiance of the men socially positioned to deny the matches until they enter the fairy wood on the margins of their community. Meanwhile, Shakespeare is able to present sociocultural and politicoreligious scenarios that pose direct challenges to British social convention and state mandate in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* largely by virtue of the fairy lore he invokes in conjunction with the subversive aspects of the play's plot, along with its ostensible setting in pre-Christian Athens.

The play begins with two disputes: Hermia's argument with both her father, Egeus, and her ruler, Duke Theseus, over whom she should marry; and the Queen of Fairyland, Titania's, stormy feud with her consort and fairy king, Oberon, over custody of a beautiful young changeling boy. The first of these quarrels has an important offshoot—Hermia's dearest friend, Helena, is in love with Demetrius, the man whom Egeus and Theseus are trying to force Hermia to marry. Hermia and her true love, Lysander, run away into the woods outside Athens with plans to elope; Helena sends Demetrius after them so that she can, in turn, pursue him. All four of the lovers have their mésalliances sorted out in the fairy wood with the assistance of a magical herb that Oberon uses for the cross purposes of assisting the Athenian women (after a few false starts caused by Oberon's lightheartedly wicked lackey, Puck) and stymieing Titania's opposition to his appropriation of the changeling boy.

There are several important connections between women and fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*:

1. Central among the "actual" fairy characters in the play is the fairy queen. Popular belief almost universally construed fairyland to be under the sway of a female monarch, not always paired with a male consort as is Shakespeare's Titiania.[17]
2. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* relies on the topos of inversion, particularly with respect to gender roles. If one focuses on the women characters as the axes on which these inversions turn, alternatives to the play's surface texts of patriarchal rule emerge.
3. The play features contrasting depictions of female characters who are linked in their violations of socially prescribed gender norms. It is a particular character's status as a fairy or her alignment with the fairy realm that serves to sanction her socially aberrant conduct.[18]

Though early modern accounts of fairy doings often assigned gender identities to the key figures in the stories, such gender identification did not necessarily cohere with gender-role assignments in the human sphere. The connections forged in this play between women who violate social expectations regarding gender roles and gender-ambiguous fairy characters remove the gender-linked potential for condemnation for scandalous acts such as following one's love unwanted and unchaperoned into the woods. Fairyland is a space free from sociocultural strictures, which were most confining for women and the servant classes. Fairyland is a fanciful space, but it was dreamed up for a reason. To bowdlerize W. B. Yeats, In dreams begin possibilities.

Fairy Lore

Many critics[19] attribute to Shakespeare alone the compression of fairies with moral attributes ranging from the benevolent pastels of rainbows to the malignant shades of charcoal dust and charnel-house ash common in the popular beliefs of his age into monochrome, good-natured sprites able to nap in nutshells. There are also, however, a vocal minority of critics who share my view that Shakespeare rendered the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* perhaps more good-natured than the devil's kin, but still something less than kind. David P. Young, for example, asserts of the fairies that

"Their benevolent presence in this play serves to emphasize the comic context only if they are recognized as potentially dangerous."[20] David Bevington makes a similar claim about Puck and Oberon in particular, noting that "their chief power to do good lies in withholding the mischief of which they are capable."[21]

The confusion about the precise moral nature of the fairies among critics stems from a similar uncertainty conveyed even by Shakespeare's sprites. Puck seems to think that they need to conduct themselves as their demonic counterparts, the "damnèd spirits" (III.ii.382), do, while Oberon insists that they need not do so (III.i-i.388ff.) only to contradict himself in conversation with Titania on this same point later (IV.i.94–95).[22] The dispute among the fairies about which set of guidelines for "spirit conduct" applies to them serves as an index of the general ambiguity in which their spiritual status was held.[23] Such ambiguity makes them the ideal overseers of an unknown and unknowable realm such as the fairy wood outside Athens—a region on the margins of a patriarchal society in which the rules of that society no longer apply and experiment and exploration are the order of the day—or night.

It is their ability to veer from the beaten path and yet still reach safe haven that renders liminal figures such as fairies and the characters associated with them pointers toward new ways of ordering personal and social relationships, responsibilities, and institutions. Speaking specifically of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,* Marjorie Garber highlights the potential transformative power of fairy limininality: "It is perhaps not too fanciful to compare such spirits with the impulse to creation, working in the half-light of the subconscious, shadows in place of and in some ways greater than the substance they portend."[24] Since they are the products of the human imagination in the first place, fairies "embody" (in their lack of body) the impulse to imagine life lived differently, social roles cast in other ways.

Fairies offer a number of alternatives to the human social order since there are so many types of fairies who behave in unique ways. Ernest Schanzer quite rightly points out that Shakespeare presents us with no less than "three wholly distinct kinds of fairies": ethereal, acorn-nesting sprites; the apparently human-sized Oberon and Titania (since they reputedly have sexual liaisons with mortals); and Puck, who was not considered a fairy at all until Shakespeare's depiction of him.[25] Minor White Latham discusses Puck's outsider status, noting: "That Robin Goodfellow was not a native of fairyland, Shakespeare seems to have been well aware, since he takes pains to show that he is unknown to the fairies of *A Midsummer Night's Dream,*

and to identify him to them and to the audience in the traditional way by which Robin Goodfellow was identified—by his figure and appearance and by a recital of his exploits and characteristics.''[26] Robin Goodfellow was typically depicted with a huge phallus and a broom. It takes little present-day imagination to come up with reasons why early modern women might have sat around the fire over their darning sharing tales about a figure with such attributes—or why he was such a popular character in ballads and tales. The Fairy who meets Puck at the beginning of act II identifies him as ''that shrewd and knavish sprite . . . That frights the maidens of the villagery. . . . Mislead[s] night wanderers, laughing at their harm'' (II.i.33, 35, 39). These are all activities in which Puck engages during the play, misleading the squabbling Lysander and Demetrius, terrifying Hermia and Helena, jeering all the while, ''Lord, what fools these mortals be!'' (III.ii.115).[27]

Yet it is vital to recognize the ambiguity of all of the fairy characters in this play. Jan Kott, for instance, points out that the lullaby that the fairies sing to Titania in II.ii is rather more alarming than soothing, with its catalog of snakes, newts, and so forth, signaling to the audience that the wood is ''inhabited by devils and lamias, in which witches and sorceresses can easily find everything required for their practices.''[28] Though Kott tips the balance rather far toward the demonic end of the scale in his discussion of the fairies, he is quite right to point out the way in which they can alternately appear as magnanimous with a veneer of menace, or vice versa.

Titania warns her ass-headed lover, Bottom, not to try to leave the woods because ''I am a spirit of no common rate'' (III.i.154). This is an interesting line to set off against Oberon's ''We are spirits of another sort'' (III.ii.388). Oberon's claim is a collective reference, whereas Titania focuses on herself and sets herself apart from—and above—other spirits. The action of the play bears this out, since Oberon is unable to ''control'' his wife (or get her changeling boy) until he drugs her. The stage directions in the 1600 quarto of the play trace out this power dynamic. While all stage directions refer to Oberon and Titania as the King and Queen of Fairies, his speech prefixes throughout are ''Ob.'' whereas hers undergo a metamorphosis tied directly to her drugging. So, in their first scene, her speech prefixes shift among ''Queene,'' ''Queen,'' and ''Qu.,'' while his are always ''Ob.'' Significantly, once Oberon anoints Titania's eyes, she undergoes a demotion in speech prefixes. While she is still referred to as the ''Queene of Fairies'' in stage directions, her speech prefixes from this point onward shift to ''Tytania'' or ''Tyta.'' or ''Tita.,'' rather than her title.[29] Popular lore about fairies almost

universally imagined the realm under the sway of a fairy queen, specifically. The presence of such beliefs in the background of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* adds resonance to the fact that the main plot concerns two rebellious young Athenian women who successfully defy the express commands of father, duke, and—in Helena's case—future spouse by foraying into the fairy kingdom.

Fairy Feminism

Given the play's interrogation of sociopolitical structures, it is significant that the realm to which Helena and Hermia fly is a matriarchy, albeit one in the throes of a temporary period of Saturnalian misrule by its king. For her part, Hermia finds her voice before she ever leaves Athens, publicly defying father and duke in boldly expressing her desire to marry Lysander.[30] She and Helena only fully

A Midſommer nights Dreame.

And now they neuer meete in groue, or greene,
By fountaine cleere, or ſpangled ſtarlight ſheene,
But they do ſquare, that all their Elues for feare
Creepe into acorne cups, and hide them there.
Fai. Either I miſtake your ſhape and making quite,
Or elſe you are that ſhrewd and knauiſh ſpirit,
Call'd *Robin good-fellow*. Are you not hee,
That frights the maidens of the Villagree,
Skim milke, and ſometimes labour in the querne,
And bootleſſe make the breathleſſe huſwife cherne,
And ſometime make the drinke to beare no barme,
Miſ-leade night-wanderers, laughing at their harme,
Thoſe that hobgoblin call you, and ſweete Puck,
You do their worke, and they ſhall haue good lucke.
Are not you he? (the night,
Rob. Thou ſpeak'ſt aright; I am that merry wanderer of
I leaſt to *Oberon*, and make him ſmile,
When I a fat and beane-fed horſe beguile;
Neighing in likeneſſe of a ſilly foale,
And ſometime lurke I in a goſſips bole,
In very likeneſſe of a roſted crab,
And when ſhe drinkes, againſt her lips I bob,
And on her withered dewlop poure the ale.
The wiſeſt Aunt telling the ſaddeſt tale,
Sometime for three foote ſtoole, miſtaketh me,
Then ſlip I from her bum, downe topples ſhe,
And tailour cryes, and fals into a coffe,
And then the whole Quire hold their hips, and loffe,
And waxen in their mirth, and neeze, and ſweare,
A merrier houre was neuer waſted there.
But roome Fairy, here comes *Oberon*.
Fai. And here my miſtreſſe: would that he were gone.
Enter the King of Fairies at one doore with his traine, and the Queene at another with hers.
Ob. Ill met by moone-light, proud *Tytania*.
Queen.

A Midſommer nights Dreame.

Queene. What, iealous *Oberon*? Fairy skip hence.
I haue forſworne his bed and company.
Ob. Tarry raſh wanton; am not I thy Lord?
Qu. Then I muſt be thy Lady: but I know
When thou haſt ſtollen away from Fairy Land,
And in the ſhape of *Corin*, ſat all day,
Playing on pipes of corne, and verſing loue,
To amorous *Phillida*. Why art thou here
Come from the fartheſt ſteepe of *India*?
But that forſooth the bouncing *Amazon*,
Your buskind miſtreſſe, and your warrior loue,
To *Theſeus* muſt be wedded; and you come,
To giue their bed ioy and proſperity.
Ob. How canſt thou thus for ſhame, *Tytania*,
Glance at my credite, with *Hippolita*?
Knowing I know thy loue to *Theſeus*.
Didſt not thou leade him through the glimmering night,
From *Perigenia*, whom he raviſhed?
And make him with faire Eagles breake his faith
With *Ariadne*, and *Antiopa*?
Quee. Theſe are the forgeries of iealouſie,
And neuer ſince the middle Sommers ſpring,
Met we on hill, in dale, forreſt or mead,
By paued fountaine, or by ruſhy brooke,
Or in the beached margent of the ſea,
To dance our ringlets to the whiſtling winde,
But with thy brawles thou haſt diſturbd our ſport.
Therefore the windes, pyping to vs in vaine,
As in reuenge, haue ſuckt vp from the ſea,
Contagious fogs; which falling in the Land,
Hath euery pelting riuer made ſo proud,
That they haue ouer-borne their Continents.
The Oxe hath therefore ſtretcht his yoke in vaine,
The ploughman loſt his ſweat, and the greene Corne
Hath rotted, ere his youth attaind a beard:
B 4 The

In their first scene together, Oberon is identified as "the King of the Fairies" in the stage direction, but he is never identified by this title in speech prefixes. Titania, on the other hand, is only referred to in both stage directions and speech prefixes as some variation on "Queene" during this altercation. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Newberry Library, from shelfmark Case 3A 894, sigs. B3 verso and B4 recto.)

The Throſtle, with his note ſo true,
The Wren with little quill.

Tytania. What Angell wakes me from my flowry bed?

Bot. The Finch, the Sparrow, and the Larke,
The plainſong Cuckow gray;
Whoſe note full many a man doth marke,
And dares not anſwer, nay.
For indeed, who would ſet his wit to ſo fooliſh a bird?
Who would giue a bird the lye, though he cry Cuckow, neuer ſo?

Tyta. I pray thee gentle mortall, ſing againe,
Mine eare is much enamored of thy note;
On the firſt view to ſay, to ſweare I loue thee.
So is mine eye enthralled to thy ſhape,
And thy faire vertues force (perforce) doth moue me,

Bot. Me-thinks miſtreſſe, you ſhould haue little reaſon for that: and yet to ſay the truth, reaſon and loue keepe little company together, now adayes. The more the pitty, that ſome honeſt neighbours will not make them friends. Nay I can gleeke vpon occaſion.

Tyta. Thou art as wiſe, as thou art beautifull.

Bot. Not ſo neither: but if I had wit enough to get out of this wood, I haue enough to ſerue mine owne turne.

Tyta. Out of this wood, do not deſire to goe,
Thou ſhalt remaine here, whether thou wilt or no.
I am a ſpirit of no common rate:
The Sommer ſtill doth tend vpon my ſtate,
And I do loue thee; therefore go with me,
Ile giue thee Fairies to attend on thee;
And they ſhall fetch thee Iewels from the deepe,
And ſing, while thou on preſſed flowers doſt ſleepe:
And I will purge thy mortall groſſeneſſe ſo,
That thou ſhalt like an ayry ſpirit go.
Peaſe-bloſſome, Cobweb, Moth, and Muſtard-ſeed.

Enter foure Fairies.

Dragged into a liaison with a weaver wearing an ass's head, Titania undergoes a demotion in speech prefix from "Queene" to her name only. (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Newberry Library, from shelfmark Case 3A 894, sig. D3 recto.)

realize their own visions, however, once they have passed a night in the fairy wood.

Situated on the margin of the patriarchal Athenian city-state, the fairy wood is a place where these defiant young women are free to explore not only another world and mode of life, but the gender-role inversions that Helena invokes as she soliloquizes about her plan to flee Athens and its oppressions. The fairies and the women who are aligned with them, their ambiguous natures, and their subversive activities serve as presentations of alternatives that are not dismissed or appropriated by the existing patriarchal system in the last act simply because that system still exists. This is particularly clear when characters such as Oberon (whose love juice has helped Hermia and Helena to the spouses they fought patriarchal order to obtain), Titania, and Puck have the last words in the play. The audience has not entirely left the fairy realm for Athens at the play's close, since Puck—an interloper into even the fairy world—has found his way into the city-state to deliver the play's final word, and Demetrius is blissfully married to Helena only because he is still suffering the effects of a fairy drug.[31]

Puck and Oberon collude in both hindering and promoting the romantic action in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (hereafter cited as *MND*), driving the play toward its comic climax. However, the plot into which they intervene has already been planned out and set in motion by Hermia and Helena.[32] Hermia deceives her father to secure Lysander as her spouse, and Helena deceives both her friends (Hermia and Lysander) and the object of her affections (Demetrius) in the hope of winning what seems a lost love cause. Both women play the matchmaker for themselves. Their boldness in this regard is seconded—significantly, not *initiated*—by Oberon. Thus, Hermia and Helena's conduct links them to the roles typically undertaken by fairies in mortals' love lives[33] and receives the explicit sanction of the fairy king, who assists in actualizing their desires.

The critical debate over the status of the "conquered" queens in *MND* and the relationship that they bear to the play's paradoxically paired yet polarized women can be sorted out if one imagines all four of the play's central female characters on a continuous power loop. At the outset, Hermia may not know by what power she is made bold to speak, but she is so emboldened. She also starts out in a stronger position than Helena with respect to her love life, because she has the love of the man she wants to marry, Lysander. However, as Hippolyta has, Hermia has won the heart of a man, Demetrius, who is willing to coerce her into an unwanted union. Hippolyta may be a queen, but she is a conquered and captured one when the play

opens, regardless of how one interprets her attitude toward Theseus and the notion of marrying him. Even though Hermia is much lower on the social hierarchy than Hippolyta, she initially has more power on the marriage market than the captive queen because she manages to escape Athens and its restrictive marital code.

Titania, as supernatural monarch, holds sway in the fairy kingdom when she enters the scene, but she becomes linked to the lovelorn Helena after Oberon uses the same drug to interfere in both of their affairs. Both Titania and Helena have a fierce devotion to a loved one that they will risk everything to preserve: in Titania's case, it is the changeling boy, and in Helena's case it is Demetrius. When the play opens, Titania is in possession of her love object, while Helena is deprived of hers but determined to do what it takes to get him. Until the last act of the play, no one woman's fortune rises without causing a consequent fall in that of another. For instance, the same bit of fairy magic—the pansy juice—is used to wrest Titania's treasured changeling from her and catapult Helena into the power position held by Hermia in Athens: pursued by two men, one of whom she deeply loves.

The catfight between Helena and Hermia is significant with respect to this cycle: with so little legitimate power at their disposal in a patriarchal culture, they are reduced to attacking one another to gain any ground. The culture in which Shakespeare wrote *MND* was marked by intragender power struggles, such as the tendency of women to deflect responsibility for legal and moral crises in their communities from themselves by accusing one another of witchcraft. However, in this play the sorcerer and his apprentice are male and, by act V, all four of the central female characters have broken out of the endless oscillation of the power loop. Titania is restored to her rightful role as queen if not as surrogate mother (a question that I think the play leaves ambiguous), both Hermia and Helena are comfortably settled into the relationships they want, and even the forcibly married Hippolyta has her day in the Sun since she realizes the import of the lovers' "dream." As Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin put it, "In accepting the lovers' consensus as a kind of authority for their story, she is willing to entertain the possibility of a realm of experience that Theseus neither dominates nor acknowledges."[34] Christy Desmet goes further still, arguing that the play's poetic structure and language are feminized and stand in contradiction to Theseus's patriarchal construction of his own authority: "Through the art of rhetorical ornament, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* counters Theseus's rationalist ethics with a feminized fairy poetics."[35] The spokesperson for this poetics, Hippolyta, is a powerful

queen among the Amazons, but a prisoner in Athens—a woman on the verge of the life-altering event of marriage brought low by circumstance, comparable to Bessie Dunlop or Helena, and, therefore, uniquely open to fairy influence. Little wonder, then, that she can make allowance for a narrative that her fiancé, that paragon of patriarchy, cannot countenance. Though she is still marrying her captor, her powers of insight and interpretation in the final scene are demonstrably superior to his, since the fairies whose power she is willing to acknowledge whereas her husband is not remain present to the omniscient audience, cavorting around the stage.

Fairy Sexuality

David Marshall suggests reading *MND* through the lens of the story of the Bacchae to find the calm within the fairy-precipitated chaos, contending that if one considers that tale of female sexual power unleashed as "a hidden model for Shakespeare's play," one discovers "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a conflict between 'masculine' principles of rationality and order and 'female' principles of sexuality and passion."[36] Sexuality pervades the play, from Hermia's demure plea that Lysander "lie further off" (II.ii.50) to Titiania's luxurious bestial interlude with the ass-headed Bottom, to Demetrius's threatening acknowledgment of the ways that he might take advantage of Helena's unchaperoned presence in the fairy wood. Since Hermia has also willingly entered the fairy wood with no escort save a man whom she has been forbidden to marry, both heroines engage in inappropriate female conduct according to the gender conventions of the day. The rapacious sexuality invoked by Demetrius in the wood is in keeping with fairy belief, in which tales of fairy abduction tinged with sexual tension figure prominently. After first threatening to leave Helena to the mercy of the wood's wild beasts, Demetrius swears, "If thou follow me, do not believe / But I shall do thee some mischief in the wood" (II.i.236–37).[37] In response, Helena first laments the Athenian social order, which mandates that women "cannot fight for love, as men may do" (II.i.241). However, the as yet uncoupled couple are no longer in Athens, but in fairyland, a fact at which Helena unwittingly glances when she swears to "follow thee and make a heaven of hell" (II.i.243). Fairyland is a convenient space in which to undertake such a daunting task since, in popular lore, it was either associated directly with the liminal spiritual zone of purgatory or construed as an ambiguous intermediary

space between heaven and hell. In the convoluted fairy love-drug fest that ensues, all of the lovers sample both bliss and torment.

Helena's speech on inversion launches the play's exploration of the topos of the world "upside-down"[38] and sets the stage for a consideration of gender relations in the physical realm specifically since she invokes mythological rape narratives even as she promises to alter the standard power dynamic. Helena does not intend to rape Demetrius in the sexual sense, but, rather, in the sense of making him captive to the marital union she so fiercely desires and he resists. Watching Demetrius run away from her (in pursuit of Lysander and Hermia), Helena vows:

> The story shall be changed:
> Apollo flies and Daphne holds the chase,
> The dove pursues the griffin, the mild hind
> Makes speed to catch the tiger—bootless speed,
> When cowardice pursues and valor flies!
>
> (II.i.230–34)

It is intriguing, given the way that matters fall out, that Helena invokes the example of an aborted rape. Rather than being transformed into a laurel tree by sympathetic divine forces (as Daphne is, fleeing her would-be rapist, Apollo), Demetrius is transformed into precisely what Helena wants him to be: her doting paramour. The supernatural sympathies in this case are aligned with the pursuer, rather than her victim. Helena's speech thus presents a vision of a woman successfully pursuing and capturing a man.

"The Problem of Helena"

Kott focuses on Helena's act I soliloquy[39] as "really the author's monologue . . . in which, for the first time, the philosophical theme of the *Dream* is stated (love and death)."[40] Although she has the most stage time of any of the mortal characters in the play,[41] Helena typically gets short shrift in the critical attention paid to *Dream*. Literary critics pass her by as a pathetic example of passivity in subordination. We ought all, however, to pay the attention to Helena that Oberon does within the play. "You, mistress, all this coil is 'long of you" (III.ii.339), Hermia hisses in the play's cat fight. That is true: Helena is, in fact, the somewhat unwitting dea ex machina of much of the plot. Demetrius follows Hermia and Lysander into the woods because Helena pushes him in that direction. And it is because Oberon

overhears Helena's pathetic exchange with Demetrius that he sends Puck on his series of misdirected love-drug errands. Furthermore, Helena is the woman in the play who ultimately gets the man she wants against seemingly insurmountable odds: the opposition of the duke (who intends him for her friend, Hermia) and the opposition of the man himself (who has sworn her off in favor of Hermia). Hermia, at least, has Lysander on her side. In the end, Hermia is, in essence, a side-car beneficiary of Oberon's stated goal of helping Helena get her man.

Oberon forges a connection with Helena as soon as he finds her in the wood. Significantly, at precisely the moment when he decides to take pity on her, Oberon calls Helena a "nymph": "Fare thee well, nymph. Ere he do leave this grove / Thou shalt fly him, and he shall seek thy love" (II.i.245–46). Noel Williams notes that the etymological roots for *fairy* include the Latin *nympha*.[42] Thus, Oberon aligns Helena by name with the fairy realm he inhabits as he echoes her promise to change not just myth but her own story to its diametrical opposite. It is indicative of the liberating spirit of fairyland that Oberon's initial impulse when confronted with Helena's lamentation about and promised fight against the social strictures that limit her ability to pursue the man she wants is to help her get what she wants, on her terms. As Diane Purkiss notes, "Very often in fairy stories, the fairies are the only allies a woman has."[43]

"Ill Met by Moonlight, Proud Titania" (II.i.60)

The majority of theatrical and popular representations of fairyland in early modern England depicted a queen who had either sole sovereign authority or dominance over her partner. The Welsh fairy queen's name was Mab, a fact of which Shakespeare seems to have been cognizant when writing Mercutio's fanciful speech on the origin of dreams in *Romeo and Juliet* (I.iv.53–95). Mab is not given a consort, and neither is the fairy queen of Shakespeare's *Merry Wives of Windsor* (though Sir Hugh is available to play him). Neither Thomas Dekker nor Ben Jonson pairs his fairy queen with a partner, coequal or otherwise, in *The Whore of Babylon* and *The Alchemist*, respectively.[44] Spenser implies that his Gloriana is single in anticipation of her union with Arthur, but *The Faerie Queene* does not depict this relationship. Yet more examples from early modern fairy plays by Michael Drayton and John Lyly, among others, could be offered. English and Welsh lore identified fairyland's queen as the center of power.[45] In the context of that belief, Shakespeare's depiction of Ob-

eron as lording it over the drugged Titania serves as another of the play's many inversions. In Titania's case, this inversion involves both class (i.e., queen doting on a laborer; queen doting on a creature part man, part animal) and gender inversion (when not under the influence of drugs, she clearly has no problem denying Oberon's requests).[46]

The first encounter between Titania and Oberon highlights another of the fairy queen's standard attributes in popular lore: her sexual taste for mortal men. According to Oberon, Titania has disrupted several of Theseus's dalliances in order to seduce him herself (II.i.74–80). As Diane Purkiss notes, "The queen's sexual unruliness is a signifier both of her otherness and her power,"[47] hence the significance of the fact that Oberon uses the pansy juice not only to overpower Titania's otherwise indomitable will where the changeling child is concerned, but also to place her in a compromising position with a dim-witted peasant wearing an ass head.

Titania's conduct poses a direct challenge to the early modern rubric for the good wife, "chaste, silent and obedient."[48] She neither obeys nor prioritizes her spouse—her friendship with the votaress and the associated devotion that she has to the votaress's child, the changeling boy, are higher priorities for Titania. Discussing the "counterdiscourse" active within and activated by *MND*, Louis Montrose writes: "*A Midsummer Night's Dream* pinpoints some of the joints and stresses in the ideological structures that shaped the culture of which it is an instance; and it discloses—perhaps, in a sense, despite itself—that patriarchal norms are compensatory for men's perception that they are vulnerable to the powers of women."[49] Titania is an interesting figure to examine in the light of this logic, since she is a fantasy construct of a female figure with "real" power.[50]

Though we see Titania's world turned upside down during the period of misrule that constitutes most of the play's action, Titania is still the fairy queen. She is the wellspring of the alternative feminine power that the play explores since that exploration takes place in her realm—even if she has been incapacitated for the duration. Titania's status as fairy queen is an important aspect of Oberon's role as the lord of misrule. Oberon as fairy king "adopts" Helena, as it were, from the moment she enters the wood, linking her to the liminal zone he inhabits both by the interest he takes in her and by his identification of her as a kindred spirit—a nymph. As a male monarch in a realm ruled by a queen, Oberon is something between ruler and ruled. He is, therefore, sympathetic to the cause of a woman bold enough to pursue her love indecorously into the woods, but sufficiently insecure to whimper, "I am your spaniel; and,

Demetrius, / The more you beat me I will fawn on you" (II.i.203–4).[51] Although Titania has not ordered him to take up the task, Oberon stands in a relation to Helena similar to that of Tom Reid with respect to Bessie Dunlop—he is her spirit-world guardian. As lord of misrule, Oberon, and his miscreant messenger, Puck, are only too pleased to help Helena realize her unruly goal of reversing the age-old story of man chasing woman since, as Puck gleefully notes, "Those things do best please me / That befall preposterously" (III.ii.120–21).

Yet many critics read Oberon as subversive of Athenian patriarchal structures only, neglecting the matriarchal aura of fairyland. Mary Ellen Lamb, for example, asserts that "patriarchy is restored as Oberon overcomes Titania's brief rebellion against his wishes"[52] while Leonard Tennenhouse figures Oberon as "the traditional alternative to patriarchal law. . . . He is the figure of carnival."[53] This reading is only half right: Oberon is not merely the figure of misrule because he embodies alternatives to Theseus's patriarchal rigidity in act I, as Tennenhouse suggests here, but because he undermines the power of the fairy queen, who has apparently been able to deny him the changeling child he wants on her own strength prior to her incapacitation under the influence of Oberon's drug. Caroline Bicks goes even further, identifying Oberon as the "parallel ruler" to Theseus, who is plotting over the course of the play Titania's "*re*-appropriation into his bed and polity."[54] The problem with this logic is that to an early modern audience Titania would be the parallel ruler to Theseus. Oberon is merely appropriating her power—temporarily. Read through the lens of popular lore about fairies and the eminence of their queen, the act of defiance in the fairy realm of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* is not Titania's refusal to relinquish the Indian boy to Oberon, but Oberon's seizure of the boy from a furtively drugged Titania.

Changelings

The eye of the storm swirling around Oberon and Titania, wreaking havoc on the Athenian landscape, is the treasured Indian boy. A number of critics have discussed the absent presence of this child rendered charming through description alone.[55] In a sense, Oberon gains custody of a whole group of changelings—the four Athenian lovers as well as the Indian boy—once he decides to drug Titania.[56] *Changeling* was a rather elastic term in early modern England and could refer to any substitute for another person or to general fick-

leness in addition to the literal fairy brat substituted for a healthy human infant.[57] Given the virtual interchangeability of Helena and Hermia as far as Demetrius and Lysander are concerned once they are drugged, any and all of the four lovers could be construed as changelings. Despite his insistence on securing the Indian boy for his henchman, Oberon seems to lose interest in him once he has secured the child in his bower to focus instead on his *chère* apparent, Helena.

As does the fairy king who helps her, Helena gains the relationship she has so craved with a ''changeling boy'' of her own. Fickle Demetrius, who once professed to love her but then switched his allegiance to Hermia, has been sent ricocheting back to Helena again by virtue of Oberon's love drug. When Oberon directs Puck to release Lysander from his pansy-induced attachment to Helena to restore him to his rightful mistress, Hermia, he offers an herb ''whose liquor hath this virtuous property, / To take from thence all error with his might'' (III.ii.367–68). Later, when he applies this same herb himself to the eyes of the sleeping Titania to release her from the love-juice spell, Oberon does so with these words: ''Be as thou wast wont to be / See as thou wast wont to see'' (IV.i.70–71). She was wont to deny him the changeling boy—to exactly which manifestation of her former self, therefore, is Oberon restoring her? For an early modern audience familiar with the lore surrounding the fairy queen and the unquestioned centrality of her authority, the drug-induced free love antics of Titania would have been amusing in large part because of their anticipation of her return to her senses—and her return to control.

Titania stands in contrast to the lovers, whose transformations, G. K. Hunter argues, have to be preserved ''to complete the pattern.''[58] As do many other critics, Hunter here lumps together the experiences had by the lovers in the fairy wood although they are actually quite distinct. The one character in the text whose transformation is preserved in the final act is Demetrius. Lysander's ''transformation'' does not count as such since it was a mistake—he is turned away from Hermia by accident, only to be turned right back again. Demetrius is the one character who has not been released from the influence of Oberon's pansy-juice drug in the final scene. At the play's conclusion, he is still Helena's drug-addled love slave. Demetrius is the only person who does not get what he wants from his sojourn in the fairy wood and he is deprived of success so that Helena may be accorded it.[59]

The chaos in the lovers' lives is sustained rather than alleviated in the woods to which they flee in hopes of succor by Puck; Oberon,

who issues the orders for the use of the pansy drug, has no intention of causing Helena more heartache—he seeks only to solve her romantic problems. The confusion reaches its zenith, of course, in act III, when all four lovers are reunited and Helena's status as a changeling for Hermia—as the recipient of both Lysander's and Demetrius's affections—becomes apparent. Helena launches the name calling in the play's climactic catfight, addressing Hermia as "You counterfeit, you puppet, you!" (III.ii.288). The reference to Hermia as a "puppet" has fairy significance.[60] Robert Greene's play *The Scottish History of James IV*, for example, opens with a scene in which Oberon treats Bohan, a Scottish misanthrope, to a fairy dance "to gratulate" him for his hatred of the world. The testy Bohan scares the dancing sprites away and then asks, "What where those Puppits that hopt and skipt about me year whayle?" to which Oberon replies, "My subjects." Bohan scoffs, "Ha, ha, ha, thinkest thou those puppits can please me?"[61] Having been identified as puppet and nymph, respectively, both Hermia and Helena have been linked by label to the fairies by the middle of the play.

The language of fairydom (puppet and dwarf) coexists with that of May Day in Hermia's response. Her reference to Helena as a "painted maypole" returns the fairy compliment Helena paid her with "puppet" and simultaneously glances at the fact that Helena has gained the upper hand of her, since one of the figures of folklore popularly imagined as presiding over May Day's saturnalia was the Fairy Queen.[62] Hermia's enraged reply to Helena's taunt also reinforces the connection between her and the fairies suggested by Helena, since she identifies herself as "dwarfish":

> "Puppet?" Why, so! Ay, that way goes the game. . . .
> And are you grown so high in his esteem
> Because I am so dwarfish and so low?
> How low am I, thou painted maypole? Speak!
> How low am I? I am not yet so low
> But that my nails can reach unto thine eyes.
>
> (III.ii.289, 293–97)

Actually, it is not because Hermia is "dwarfish" that the tables have been turned at all, but because a dwarf's near kin, Puck, has exerted his influence over the situation.

Even Lysander gets in on the fairy insults eventually, piling up epithets that link Hermia to the fairies: "Get you gone, you dwarf! / You minimus, of hindering knotgrass made! / You bead, you acorn!" (III.ii.328–30). Though not, strictly speaking, fairies, dwarfs

were considered inhabitants of fairyland. Referring to Hermia as an acorn looks back to the first fairy exchange staged in the play, in which Titania and Oberon's elves are depicted as hiding from the wrath of their mistress and master by creeping into acorn cups (II.i.30–31). By the end of the catfight, therefore, both Hermia and Helena have been firmly linked to the fairy realm, a connection that will prove to have a salvific effect on their romantic lives. In a certain sense, Oberon underscores the bankruptcy of his own behavior toward Titania in his stern chastisement of Puck for using the love juice to set up a love triangle contrary to the desires of a woman—Helena.[63] That is precisely the manner in which Oberon himself is employing the love juice—to override the desires of not only a woman, but his queen.[64]

As her husband has a penchant for Helena, Titania, too, has a history of great sympathy for a mortal woman, her deceased friend, the Indian votaress. The passage about her passionate devotion to the changeling boy for his mother's sake in the first fairy scene is crucial to understanding her refusal to hand him over to Oberon:

> The fairyland buys not the child of me.
> His mother was a vot'ress of my order,
> And in the spicèd Indian air by night
> Full often hath she gossiped by my side
> And sat with me on Neptune's yellow sands,
> Marking th'embarkèd traders on the flood,
> When we have laughed to see the sails conceive
> And grow big-bellied with the wanton wind;
> Which she, with pretty and with swimming gait,
> Following—her womb rich with my young squire—
> Would imitate.
>
> (II.i.122–32)

Titania pours out her heart to her husband, exposing the full depth of her grief when her friend, "being mortal, of that boy did die" (II.i.135), emphasizing how close they were while she lived. Indeed, Caroline Bicks suggests, "In addition to evoking the relationship of mother and gossip, then, the two women appear to share a sexual past through their parentage of the child, a bond that erases the father altogether."[65] Seemingly hopeful that her explanation will suffice, Titania goes on graciously to invite Oberon to accompany her and her fairies in the "moonlight revels" being hosted for Theseus's wedding. In his reply, Oberon seems rather self-absorbed and petulant: "Give me that boy, and I will go with thee" (II.i.141, 143). The potence of emotional attachment and the pain that it can cause

are not ideas that Oberon seems capable of comprehending when Titania describes them to him. This makes his immediate sympathy with Helena's plight all the more unlooked-for and ironic.

Stevie Davies argues that Oberon's jealousy over Titania's possession of the Indian boy

> seems invalidated by the power of the poetry in which Titania evokes her dead friend. The baby's mother was herself a "votaress" like Hermia and like Diana, and, like them, a point of mediation between mortal and immortal worlds. Titania dramatises a moment in a friendship which, natural, human and playful as it was, was also impossible. It was amity between a mortal and an immortal, on equal terms—gossiping, laughing, playing—upon the narrow margin between sea and land, experienced late in that transition between states of being which is the nine-month period of human pregnancy.[66]

The liminality that Davies identifies in this passage (the seashore, a pregnant woman about to deliver, a votaress who is mortal but spends her days in devotion to and contemplation of the immortal) serves as a reminder of the liminality of the fairies themselves.

Both Davies and Montrose contrast Titania's speech about her Indian votaress with Oberon's speech about the Imperial Votaress who just missed being struck by Cupid's shaft, which lighted instead on the pansy that produces Oberon's love-inducing herb.[67] Montrose notes: "The evocative monologues of Titania and Oberon are carefully matched and contrasted: The Faery Queen speaks of a mortal mother from the east; the Faery King speaks of an invulnerable virgin from the west. Their memories express two myths of origin: Titania provides a genealogy for the changeling and an explanation of why she will not part with him; Oberon provides an aetiology of the metamorphoses flower that he will use to make her part with him."[68] In Montrose's analysis it is Titania, the fairy queen, who is grounded in the life-and-death realities of the mortal realm and Oberon—who ultimately interferes in the mortal realm more over the course of the play's action—who is associated with immortal invulnerability and magic. Such an approach belies the common critical division of the play's motifs into male and female principles. Typically, the male is construed to be the rational, ordering principle—Theseus dismisses the lovers' account of their evening as "these fairy toys" (V.i.3). In such dichotomous critical approaches the female thread in the play is the passionate, the fanciful—Hippolyta finds the lovers' tale savors of "something of great constancy" (V.i.26).[69] Yet this essentialist interpretation of the play's gender-divided visions ignores the examples offered by those figures of fancy the fairies themselves. Titania's

friendship with a mortal woman and her unflinching acceptance of its consequences—"she, being mortal, of that boy did die" (II.i.134)—smacks of the grim refusal of hope-against-hope flights of fancy attributed in essentializing analysis to the masculine principle (i.e., Theseus rejects the lovers' "fairy" tale). On the other hand, Oberon's reality-defying insistence that Helena will have the man who spurns her and his reliance on magical herbs align him more with the fantastic faith attributed to the feminine principle (i.e., Hippolyta is willing to entertain the possibility of the lovers' tales of the fairy wood). This serves as yet another instance in which the fairies slip out of essentialist gender-based frames, suggesting that their mortal counterparts might do the same and, as Helena does, succeed.[70]

Irene Dash contends, "Although some critics consider Oberon's potion a symbol of love, as it applies to Titania it appears to be more a symbol of power, or at least of revenge for her failure to release the child."[71] However, one can also see its use on Demetrius as vengeful, too, since Oberon anoints his eyes not only because he wants to help Helena, but because he resents the way that Demetrius treats her. It is ironic that Oberon takes such umbrage at Demetrius' cruelty to Helena since he is not treating his own partner particularly well. It is also interesting that Oberon corrupts the purity of the pansy juice (given its myth of origin: a shaft deflected from Cupid by a vestal virgin) in using it to entangle Titania in an adulterous, animalistic union. What is really important, however, about Oberon's dependency on the pansy's power is the fact that he can only get the upper hand of Titania temporarily, by drugging her. Apparently, when her mind and her will are her own, she is an indomitable woman, wife, and queen.

Fairy Catechism

Despite its pagan setting, *MND* is book-ended with references to Christian teachings of ambiguous institutional affiliation, and its title savors suspiciously of throwback Catholicism. Among the dates that the reformers attempted to purge, but that hung on with a vengeance among the populace, was Midsummer Day, June 24. Although the Athenian pagan Theseus opines that the four sleeping lovers have been out to observe "the rite of May" (IV.i.132), the specific titular reference to Midsummer is interesting, particularly in light of the "bonfires and floral garlands . . . pageants and parades featuring artificial giants, dragons and hobby horses that barely co-

existed with Christian tradition" used to celebrate it as late as the 1590s.[72] Even if the lovers were celebrating only the rite of May, as we have already seen in the discussion of the play's catfight, May Day had pagan (and fairy) associations as well. Despite its pagan setting, *MND* addresses some key Christian tenets: the obedience owed to fathers by their daughters, chastity, and the rejection of all gods save the one, true God.

In the first scene, Theseus threatens the intractable Hermia with a life of chastity that sounds remarkably like the Catholic sisterhood (although the play's setting is pre-Christian Athens) if she continues to defy her father's decision that she marry Demetrius. He cautions her to consider well:

> Whether, if you yield not to your father's choice,
> You can endure the livery of a nun,
> For aye in shady cloister mewed,
> To live a barren sister all your life,
> Chanting hymns to the cold fruitless moon.
>
> (I.i.69–73)

As Titania's memories of the changeling boy's mother and their relationship remind us, pagan goddesses had devotees who lived out their life in worship just as priests, monks, and nuns did in the Christian tradition. However, the terminology that Theseus uses has anachronistically pointed Christian reference.

Theseus says that Hermia will be held hostage in a "cloister" as a "barren sister." The earliest cloisters date from medieval times, and the female attendants of pagan shrines are referred to as votaresses or priestesses, but not typically addressed as "sister." Protestants did away with convents and did not ordain nuns.[73] While Catholic devotional practice is glanced at, it appears as a threat: "Either to die the death or to abjure / Forever the society of men" (I.i.65–66). Living as a "barren sister" is presented as at least equal to immediate death. This scene, therefore, offers no particular indication of Shakespeare's religious biases but does encapsulate some key doctrinal distinctions at issue during the Reformation. However, Hermia is saved from the barren sisterhood by her own boldness and daring, seconded by the fairies.[74]

The religious issues surging through the play reach their zenith in Bottom's garbled rendition of St. Paul's "Eye hath not seen" text after he is released from Puck's ass-head spell. Given Bottom's inspiration for his exegetical affront—a carnal relationship with the Queen of the Fairies—this foray into Christian spirituality also bears

directly on the play's gender issues. Bottom has, in a sense, violated both the Pauline doctrine of chastity and the Mosaic injunction against false gods. He joins a long line of early modern English-, Scots-, and Welsh(wo)men prepared to swear before judge and jury to having been entertained by that paragon of fairy hospitality, the Fairy Queen.[75] The Fairy Queen is indisputably the most popular figure of fairy lore people claim to have met. She is also a pagan figure, placed firmly outside the bounds of Christian tradition by those concerned to cultivate and protect it. It is curious and in questionable taste for Shakespeare to have the still-dazed lover of the Fairy Queen, moved by his fresh memories of dallying in her bower, spout a woefully bastardized version of Paul's celebration of the boundlessness of God's love.[76]

Recent commentators on this scene have begun to grasp the significance of the bizarre placement of English biblical text in a peasant mouth still smacking with fairy kisses. Gail Kern Paster and Howard Skiles note, ''The matter of supernatural belief could not have seemed trivial to Shakespeare's audience, caught up as they were in the ideological warfare between Protestant reformers and the Catholic Church. Bottom's interaction with fairy creatures . . . might have seemed like a comic displacement of more urgent matters of faith or it might have seemed somewhat subversive.''[77] However, Thomas Stroup claims that Bottom's speech reveals that ''Bottom has discovered the bottom of God's secrets,'' proceeding to identify the fairies as spirits of God—not an interpretation that would be borne out by early modern belief.[78] Such a view would, in fact, be pure blasphemy. Discussing the same textual moment, Chris Hassel points out that Paul was associated by the Protestants with anti-Catholicism, and that, therefore, *MND* ends with a powerful affirmation of reform doctrine.[79]

In fact, Bottom's speech allows Shakespeare to have it both ways.[80] Catholics relied on mystery to hold the attention of the faithful, allowing communion only to the priest who recited the Mass ceremony in Latin. Protestants scoffed at this approach, perceiving it as a manipulative way for a weak institution to maintain control over its members. They advocated vernacular delivery of the church service and public access to biblical texts in addition to lay participation in the communion ritual. So, Latinate Catholics in Shakespeare's audience could blame Bottom's Bible botching on the Protestant provision of access to sacred mysteries beyond his comprehension. As Emma Wilby observes, ''For those with a particularly obscure grasp of Christian teaching the cosmos would have been peopled by a medley of supernatural figures, of both Christian and pre-Chris-

tian origin, with little or no discrimination made between them, either morally or ontologically."[81] Whatever their grasp of the Scripture they studied, the Protestants in the audience could just as easily feel confident that Bottom makes such a bad job of his catechism because he is stumbling through a maze of Latin with no assistance. Protestants came to equate key Catholic tenets with fairy superstitions as a means of debunking both traditions. The spirit in which Shakespeare depicts Bottom, spouting crisscrossed scriptures with fairy dust fresh in his hair, is not at all clear. As are the fairies themselves, who are often reputed to be visible only out of the corner of one's eye, Shakespeare's religious sensibilities seem impossible to view straight on.

Conclusion

It is significant that the fairies are contained neither by the wood outside Athens nor by the play text itself.[82] In the epilogue they emerge in character from the action of the play proper to ask the audience's thanks for their performance and to send them on their way. As characters who are, by the final act, both no longer characters and still characters, they thus display their liminality even in their very relationship to Shakespeare's text and its representation. Just as they slip into Athens from out of the woods, they likewise slip into the Globe from out of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in the epilogue. Richard Strier notes that Puck's final salvo "may well manifest a real anxiety that the learned Protestant 'gentles' in the audience will truly be tempted to 'reprehend' a play that at least might be (mistakenly) taken as hearkening back to the bad old days when Robin Goodfellow and Hob Goblin were credible, and before popery was 'sufficiently discovered.' . . . Being on the side of the fairies might not put us on the side of the angels."[83] It may well, however, put us on the side of the women.

The lovers in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are ultimately united by a fairy force aligned with the female desires of both Helena and Hermia. I am not concerned with whether or not the play asserts the existence of fairies but, rather, the conditions of possibility for the things depicted as occurring under fairy influence. The play depicts not what *does* happen in marriage, but what *could* happen. Daphne could pursue Apollo. She could catch him, even. Daughters could step out of or—better still—refuse ever to enter the mold their

father makes for them.[84] Wives and female rulers could have such puissance that they need to be incapacitated with drugs before their will can successfully be defied. The story, as Helena says, could be changed; acting in concert with the fairies, the women of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* show us how.

2

"Ferry Honest Knaueries" in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*

THE PRECEDING CHAPTER TOOK ON PERHAPS THE MOST OBVIOUS OF Shakespeare's forays into staging popular beliefs about fairies with a discussion of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the only one of his comedies in which "actual" fairies appear on the stage, as characters. This chapter will address the metatheatrical presentation of fairies as self-consciously staged entities in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.[1] In this play, the Windsor wives script and stage manage a fairy play to communally authorize dangerously unseemly conduct. Religious controversies are explored via the character of Parson Hugh Evans, particularly with respect to his role as the director and leader of the band of child actors playing fairies. Here, even fabricated fairies serve to legitimate a whole host of subversive behaviors, including the act V elopement of Anne Page.

As I have argued in the introduction and in chapter one, fairy beliefs often stand as opaque "covers" for a range of socially inappropriate responses to the responsibilities of domestic and community life, including the rejection of "flawed" offspring and a wide array of sexual indiscretions. R. McDougal, in *Waifs and Strays of Celtic Tradition*, recounts a popular tale that perfectly illustrates the force of the fairy alibi in a scenario with particular relevance to *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

> A man and his wife, who dwelt in the Loch Awe district, did not agree and the woman struck up an association with another man known as Donald. She disappeared. Search was made for her far and wide but she could not be traced. However, she returned to her home every night, tidied the house and combed the children's hair. Some months later, Gillies, the husband, when passing through a wood, heard his wife calling to him "out of a large hazel bush." She told him that she wished to come home, but that she was naked and could not win free of the fairies until she was clothed once more. She begged her husband to fetch her a smock the next morning when the sun rose and to hang it on the bush.

> However, he must not try to see her, or the elves would hide her so that she would never find her way back. He did as she requested, and she told him to go straight home, to speak to nobody on the way and to turn his head neither to the right or the left. When he got home, she was sitting by the fire, with the children round her, as if nothing had happened.[2]

Now, I am pretty sure that the "elf" with whom poor Gillies's wife was passing her time was named Donald. The popularity of tales such as these would have meant that a pair of "merry" wives who taunt a would-be adulterer with fairy subterfuge would resonate for Shakespeare's audience in complex ways. Fairies in early modern England were as likely to be associated with adultery as with chastity, with Catholicism as with paganism. As I will demonstrate, this combination of unruly women, fairies, and matters of religious import emerges most clearly in the Shakespearean corpus in *The Merry Wives of Windsor.*

Fairies "much affect the papacie"

Early modern writers including James I (*Daemonologie*), Robert Burton (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*), Reginald Scot (*The Discoverie of Witchcraft*), and Samuel Harsenet (*A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures*) published attacks on fairy belief that, paradoxically, served to preserve and perpetuate the traditions.[3] During the early modern period of religious reform, fairy belief came to be reviled as the antithesis of Christianity by reform Christian sects, particularly Puritans. Over time, religious reformers equated Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary, the prominence of the saints, and the lavish ceremony of the Catholic Mass with the polytheistic pagan tradition and, often, with pagan-linked fairy belief.

The early modern conception of fairies figured them as utterly liminal figures. They at times acted in ways similar to those of pagan gods or witches and their demonic familiars, yet they were something other than gods or demons. In their status as something other than divine or demonic, fairies occupied an ambiguous spiritual zone that gave no clear sense of their moral stature or the effect that interaction with them might be likely to have on a human's spiritual account. In *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Sir Walter Scott attributes the loss of popular belief in the validity of witchcraft accusations over the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries to a preceding loss of faith in fairy belief. He asserts that "in the time of Queen Elizabeth the unceasing labour of many and

popular preachers, who declaimed against the 'splendid miracles' of the Church of Rome, produced also its natural effect upon the other stock of superstitions."[4] Over the course of the Reformation, fairy lore was conflated with Catholicism and both belief systems were written off as vain, pagan superstitions by Protestants of various stripes. This is also the period in which Shakespeare achieved popular and royal acclaim on the London stage with a series of plays featuring fairies.

Scott had numerous early modern authorities to draw upon in linking Catholicism's fall from grace in Britain to the loss of fairy faith. In his *Daemonologie*, James I dismissively compares the fairy capacity to "contract a solide bodie within so little roome" to the Catholic belief in transubstantion: "I thinke it is so contrarie to the qualitie of a naturall bodie, and so like to the little transubstantiat god in the *Papistes Masse*, that I can neuer beleeue it."[5] Such conflation of fairy belief with Catholic doctrine became a reform Protestant strategy for attacking rural superstition and Catholicism, both of which were perceived as ideological threats to the primacy of Protestantism.

John Webster similarly dismisses fairy belief, explicitly linking fairies to Catholicism. He writes: "In a few ages past when Popish ignorance did abound, there was no discourse more common (which yet is continued amongst the vulgar people) than of the apparition of certain Creatures which they called Fayries, that were of very little stature, and being seen would soon vanish and disappear."[6] In several important witchcraft trials of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,[7] fairies are mentioned in conjunction with priests, bishops, saints, the Virgin Mary, or "popery" outright. Protestants distanced themselves from all of these aspects of Catholicism in the process of distinguishing their religion from the tradition against which they had rebelled. Once they had been linked to the trappings of Catholicism, fairies and the lore associated with them, had to be rejected as well.

Shakespeare, Fairies, and Religious Controversy

A profound silence shrouds William Shakespeare's religious sympathies. He was both friend and rival to the erstwhile Catholic Ben Jonson,[8] and circumstantial evidence exists linking his father, John Shakespeare, to the recusant Catholic community.[9] As with most aspects of his personal life, however, the question of whether or not Shakespeare himself shared such sympathies remains a mystery. As did many of the playwrights with whom he lived and worked, Shake-

speare typically took pains to avoid raising religious issues in anything like a definitive way in his scripts. This circumspection extends to his treatment of fairy lore and its religious implications in the period as well, with one notable exception. Although *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is often regarded as lightweight fare when set off against the *Henry IV* tetralogy that supplies some of its characters, the comedy contains some rather weighty references to contemporary religious controversy.[10]

Unique among the Shakespearean plays that involve fairies is *The Merry Wives of Windsor.* Unlike his other fairy plays, *Merry Wives* is set in an England that—despite the interpolation of characters such as Falstaff from the Henriad—seems noticeably Elizabethan.[11] The title locale sets the play's events in the Protestant Queen's own backyard, and the faux fairies conjured by the clever Windsor wives open their ceremonies by praising queen and court. Finally, this play features a cleric, Parson Hugh Evans, who takes an inordinate interest in the fairy antics that the Windsor community get up to in seeking vengeance on the lecherous fat knight Falstaff.

Ever in need of funds to fuel his sack-and-sherris habit, Falstaff at the play's opening has hit upon the idea of pursuing a superficial sexual intrigue with either Mistress Page or Mistress Ford (or both) with the real purpose of getting at their husbands' money. Mistress Ford's husband, already suspicious of her every move, becomes maniacally jealous when he discovers the knight's intentions. After putting the entire town into an uproar under the suspicion that his wife is a whore, Ford realizes the error of his ways and contritely agrees to participate in a fairy play within the play,[12] staged by the wives with the intent of publicly punishing Falstaff and mending Mistress Ford's domestic coils with her jealous spouse.

The final act depicts the wives' planning and execution of this fairy play in which Falstaff is publicly humiliated at the hands of Windsor's "fairies"; the Pages' daughter, Anne, elopes under cover of a fairy disguise; and Ford's jealousy, Falstaff's lechery, and Anne's insurgency are communally addressed by Windsorites still costumed as fairies. The Fords reconcile at home, but the public celebration of this reconciliation occurs in the fairy realm; the plan adopted is, moreover, the imaginative creation of the Mistresses Page and Ford. As Diane Purkiss notes, "It is this female power to invent and stage supernatural stories which constitutes their principal weapon against their importunate suitors and suspicious husbands."[13] Fairy lore offered early modern women supernatural alibis for everything from extended absences from home and husband (i.e., tales of fairy abduction of people believed to be dead until their abrupt, unexpected return) to mistreatment of children (i.e., the cruel "tests" to

confirm the presence of a changeling: place the baby on the coal hod; if it flies up the chimney, it is a fairy; it if suffers third-degree burns, it is your own, proper child).

Making the most of local superstition, the Windsor wives elude inappropriate sexual advances and clear themselves of accusations of sexual impropriety via fairy subterfuge. As in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and in the tale of Gillies's wife, the fairy space in which the wives' ultimate triumph unfolds is a liminal zone: a wood on the margins of the Windsor community, delineating the space between ruler and ruled. The fairy elements invoked in *Merry Wives* are the product of the theatrical inventiveness of the Windsor wives. The Windsor parson, Sir Hugh Evans, opens the scene that includes the formulation of the fairy plot with the approving observation "'Tis one of the best discretions of a 'oman as / ever I did look upon" (IV.iv.1–2).[14] Evans offers his enthusiastic support of the wives' plan and links himself—as they do in dreaming up the plan—to the fairies, promising: "I will teach the children their behaviors, and I / will be like a jackanapes also, to burn the knight with / my taber" (IV.iv.66–68). In an era in a country in which religion was dictated by the state, it is significant that the Windsor Parson supports the wives' fairy plan to punish an overbearing lecher and an overjealous husband as no less a participant than the ringleader of the fake fairy band.[15]

Diane Purkiss concludes that Shakespeare probably gleaned the material for his fairy characters from Reginald Scot's *The Discoverie of Supposed Witchcraft*.[16] I rather imagine that Shakespeare got his fairy lore from the same place that Reginald Scot and Samuel Harsenet claimed to get it: "children, fooles, women, cowards, sick, or blacke, melancholicke, discomposed wits."[17] The source for this quote, Harsenet's *Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures* (1603), provides the ideological connections that will serve as the foundation for my argument: the dual association in early modern Britain between fairy belief and the women alleged to promulgate it, and between fairy belief and Catholic dogma. It is my contention that the frequent appearance of fairy characters in conjunction with unruly female characters in Shakespearean drama suggests new points of entry into our analysis of not only those characters, but the early modern British politicoreligious climate that such plays reflect.

Puppets, Fairies, and Feminization

Determined to prove that women's wit can be used to preserve marital fidelity and concord, the Mistresses Ford and Page decide to

humiliate Falstaff for having the gall to assume that they would welcome his adulterous advances. Paradoxically, the punishments that they devise for the "greasy knight" (II.i.101) require them to give convincing performances as aggressive adulteresses. In preparation for Falstaff's first amorous visit to Mistress Ford, the wives prepare a basket filled with dirty linen in which to hustle him away. Mistress Ford gives her servants elaborate directors' notes on their "offstage" placement, their entry cue, and their conduct in their roles[18]:

> Marry, as I told you before, John and Robert,
> be ready here hard by in the brewhouse; and when I
> suddenly call you, come forth, and without any pause
> or staggering take this basket on your shoulders. That
> done, trudge with it in all haste, and carry it among
> the whitsters in Datchet Mead, and there empty it in
> the muddy ditch close by the Thames' side.
>
> (III.iii.7–13)

When Mistress Page asks the men, "You will do it?" (III.iii.14), Mistress Ford impatiently answers for them, "I ha' told them over and over; they lack no direction" (III.iii.15–16). The direction provided here is explicitly hers.[19]

The wives discuss their own part in this first assignation with Falstaff in specifically theatrical terms. The page Robin is given his part—to tell Falstaff that Mistress Ford is alone even though Mistress Page is hiding herself in the house—and then Mistress Ford cautions, "Mistress Page, remember you your cue" (III.iii.32). Mischievously acknowledging the staginess of their deception, Mistress Page responds, "If I do not act it, hiss me" (III.iii.33). The wives' private performance gets an unexpected audience when Ford really does return home, Page, the French Dr. Caius, and the Welsh parson Sir Hugh Evans in tow. Mistresses of improvisation, the wives handle this last-minute conversion of their closet drama to a public performance with aplomb, garnering applause from even Ford's friends. Evans asserts, "Your wife is as / honest a 'omans as I will desires among five thousand, / and five hundred too" (III.iii.200–202). This alignment of Evans with the wives continues when they begin to lay plans for the final fairy scene.

The wives reveal the tricks they have been playing on Falstaff and the reasons for them after the fat knight is hustled out of the Fords' home a second time disguised as the witch of Brainford. The denigration and cudgeling of Falstaff as the old woman of Brainford do two simultaneous things: they upbraid Falstaff for his conduct, which is offensive to them, and they underscore for all of Windsor—

particularly the men of the village—the irrationality and inappropriateness of Ford's abusive responses both to his wife and to the old woman whom he construes to be a witch. Finally, of course, it places the sympathies of the audience with the women; since the spectators/readers are the only other people involved in the witch of Brainford scene who share the wives' knowledge that the old woman is actually Falstaff, we are in on the joke inherent in the punishment he receives at Ford's frantic hands.

Purkiss identifies Falstaff's stint as the witch of Brainford in *Merry Wives* as a tacit acknowledgment of the theatricality inherent in "witchcraft" itself, since "the 'witch of Brainford' is nothing more than a costume, a hat and cloak."[20] The fairies are nothing more than costumes in this play, either, for that matter—robes of white, green, and red and fingers primed for pinching. Falstaff's final moment of ignominy constitutes another instance of prosthetic theatricality, since his identity as Herne the Hunter is achieved by nothing more than the mounting of a deer's head on his shoulders. All of the supernatural elements invoked in *Merry Wives* are the product of the theatrical inventiveness of the Windsor wives. The wives are linked to fairies not only because they expressly invoke them, but also because they use disguise and deception to play mischievous pranks on the man who would take sexual advantage of them (Falstaff) and the man who thinks ill of their chastity (Ford).

As many critics have noted, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* contains two unique features that serve to feminize Falstaff in a manner derogatory both to him and to women generally.[21] Although Shakespeare frequently used the comic device of the heroine cross-dressed as a boy, *Merry Wives* marks the only instance in his corpus of a male character cross-dressing as a woman. It is of further significance that Falstaff, the transvestite in question, disguises himself not only as a woman, but as an old woman whom Ford at least believes to be a witch. Falstaff's character in *Merry Wives* invokes a whole constellation of negative stereotypes of women, in his own person (voluble liar; lustful, self-indulgent coward), in his disguise as a witch, and in his self-identification with the passive puppet, the Jack-a-Lent. Linking Falstaff to negative stereotypes of femininity in this way only to depict his complete defeat at the hands of inventive, assertive, trustworthy women who contradict those misogynistic conventions can be seen as a means of attacking and dismissing the stereotypes themselves.[22]

Phillip Stubbes's antitheatrical tract *The Anatomy of Abuses* links puppets and women even as it suggests the performative nature of gender apparent in both theatrical representations of women by

boys and in fairy belief. Addressing women's "excessive modes of dress," Stubbes claims: "when they have these goodly robes upon them, women seeme to be the smallest part of themselves, not naturall women, but artificiall women; not women of fleshe and blod, but rather puppits, or mawmets of ragges and cloutes compact together."[23] Stubbes reveals the bankruptcy of his own rigid gender-role prescriptors in even suggesting the possibility that the social construct "Woman" is somehow defined by—no more real than—the clothes she wears. In *Merry Wives*, Shakespeare combines the gender role tensions vented in fairy lore and attacks on all-male theatrical representations of people of all ages, classes, and genders.

It is significant that *Merry Wives*, a play featuring numerous instances of male-to-female cross-gender disguise, assertive women characters who work things out to their satisfaction in each and every case, and odd conglomerations of the Christian and the pagan, also includes direct reference to a puppet with particular religious import, the Jack-a-Lent. A seventeenth-century pamphlet account of Jack-a-Lent by John Taylor[24] suggests a number of similarities between early modern popular conceptions of Jack-a-Lent and contemporary beliefs about fairies. First of all, he may be associated with the Lenten season, but Taylor is rather insistent that Jack-a-Lent is not himself a Christian: "Jack is no Christian, nor was ever baptised, but is sprung (like a mushroom) out of the corruption of the name of *John*."[25] While fairies were considered pagan superstitions in early modern England, over the course of the Reformation it became popular to imagine them as Catholic sympathizers.[26] As I shall demonstrate in chapter five, fairies were then looped in with Royalist sympathies in popular political pamphlets during the British Civil War.

John Taylor lived through both of these eras, and, though he does not explicitly write fairy-inflected drama or political prose himself, he was much influenced by other writers who did so, including Thomas Dekker, Thomas Nashe, and Ben Jonson. All three of these writers invoked fairy lore and its attendant religious and political implications in their work. As they did, Taylor focused on the details of daily life in London in his writings. A waterman by trade, Taylor was well versed in the drudgery of daily existence at the Thames's side. As waterman to King James I's royal household, Taylor cultivated a loyalty to the Crown that led him to flee the city for Oxford with the royal family during the Interregnum. Recognized by the royalty for the manual labor he performed as well as for the quick wit of his verse satires, Taylor was perfectly positioned to combine popular

lore with praise for the royalty, the Jack-a-Lent with pointed religious satire.

Taylor notes that Jack-a-Lent has "a wife named *Fasting* . . . but it were very dangerous for an epicure or a puritan to have a bastard by her, for there were no other hope, but that the father of the brat (if it should prove male) would tutor it in all disobedience both against *Lent* and *Fasting*: for although *Lent* and abstinence be but forty days endurance, yet to these valiant men of their teeth it seems forty years, for they put the letter (*e*) into the word *Fast*, and turn it into *Feast*."[27] He later observes that "all the dogs in town do wag their tails for joy, when they see such provision to drive away *Lent*, (for a dog, a butcher, and a puritan, are the greatest enemies he hath)."[28] Much as Puck promises Oberon to "put a girdle round about the earth / In forty minutes" (*MND* II.i.175–76), Jack-a-Lent, Taylor notes, "hath the art of legerdemain beyond all the jugglers in *Egypt* or *Europe*, for with a trick that he hath, he is in *England*, *Scotland*, *France*, *Ireland*, and the most part of the Christian world at one and the self-same time, yet for all this nimbleness and quick agility, he was never seen to sweat, which is no marvel, because he hath not any fat or pinquidity in his incorporeal corpse."[29] Emblematic of Christianity yet not Christian, discussed in completely anthropomorphic terms yet not human, Jack-a-Lent inhabits the same sociocultural liminal limbo to which fairies were consigned.

Fairies and puppets were also linked in liminality in early modern British culture because they both evolved from cultural beliefs in "idolatry, witchcraft, and image magic."[30] Puppets were used in theatrical performances and were, thus, logically linked to early modern ambivalence about the moral standing of creatures—including both actors and fairies—capable of the kinds of deception required for convincing performances. On the basis of these cultural associations, Scott Cutler Shershow asserts that "throughout the seventeenth century and well beyond, the performing object would continue to evoke its ancient associations of the magical and the monstrous."[31] Fairies, too, had associations with both the magical and the monstrous; they were held responsible for activities in the human realm that ran the gamut from bestowing blessings such as "fairy gold," to sending blights such as blasted fields, forever infertile.

The Jack-a-Lent is invoked twice in *Merry Wives*: once to describe Falstaff's former page, Robin, and again in Falstaff's self-deprecating assessment of his sound drubbing at the hands of the Windsorites. Low on funds, Falstaff dismisses all of his hangers-on and becomes increasingly desperate to forge a relationship with the

wealthy wives of Windsor. Robin, his young page, is sent to work for Master Page, but the young servant attaches himself to Page's wife instead. The Mistresses Ford and Page use Robin as their go-between with Falstaff. They arrange an assignation that they plan to conclude not with sexual dalliance, but by the unceremonious stuffing of the fat knight into a buck basket to be emptied in the river. Mistress Page asks Robin upon his return from delivering their invitation to Falstaff: "You little Jack-a-Lent, have you been true to us?" (III.iii.22–23). The body of the boy actor playing Robin would have visually suggested the Jack-a-Lent, the puppet that early modern boys tormented during Lent.[32] Though he visually evokes the puppet, however, in his alliance with the wives Robin is placed in the role of stone-throwing boy and Falstaff becomes, by the play's final scene, the Jack-a-Lent that Robin—and all of Windsor—torment under the wives' direction.

"Wives May Be Merry"

Mistress Page describes the plan to invite Falstaff to a third and final assignation in Windsor Forest surreptitiously disguised as Herne the Hunter.[33] Page acknowledges the likelihood that the desperate knight will play into the wives' hands once again and then asks, "What is your plot?" (IV.iv.45). Mistress Page obligingly offers a lengthy summation of the plot of the wives' fairy playlet, which is punctuated by Mistress Ford's directions for the fairies' actions.[34] Mistress Page is almost Shavian in the detail of her directions for costumes, props and setting:

> Nan Page my daughter, and my little son,
> And three or four more of their growth, we'll dress
> Like urchins, aufs and fairies, green and white,
> With rounds of waxen tapers on their heads,
> And rattles in their hands. Upon a sudden,
> As Falstaff, she and I are newly met,
> Let them forth a sawpit rush at once
> With some diffusèd song. Upon their sight,
> We two in great amazedness will fly.
> Then let them encircle him about,
> And, fairylike, to pinch the unclean knight,
> And ask him why, that hour of fairy revel,
> In their so sacred paths he dares to tread
> In shape profane.
> *Mrs. Ford* And till he tell the truth,

> Let the supposed fairies pinch him sound
> And burn him with their tapers.
> *Mrs. Page* The truth being known,
> We'll all present ourselves, dis-horn the spirit,
> And mock him home to Windsor.
>
> (IV.iv.47–64)

Pinching is the traditional fairy punishment for an array of bad behavior, from seeing fairies (even if by accident) to stealing from them, to living a lewd life.[35] When the women of Windsor invoke the fairies, Anne gets her man, Mistress Ford gets a contrite husband no longer suspicious of her every move, and the Pages come to terms with the consequences of their behind-the-back, one-upping methods of child rearing.

In the final fairy scene, the wives reveal some of Falstaff's most glaring faults—particularly his lechery and his cowardice—to most of Windsor's citizens. Horrified that he has been caught by all of Windsor in the embarrassing act of taking the community's children for fairies and its Welsh parson for a satyr,[36] Falstaff is compelled to admit:

> The guiltiness of my mind, the sudden surprise of my powers, drove the grossness of the foppery into a received belief, in despite of the teeth of all rhyme and reason, that they were fairies. See now how wit may be made a Jack-a-Lent when 'tis on ill employment.
>
> (V.v.123–27)

Acknowledging the bankruptcy of his own behavior, Falstaff makes his mind—the wit upon which he has relied in his attempts to dupe the Fords, especially—no better than a puppet dancing to the beat of stones hurled by schoolboys. According to Shershow, puppets like the Jack-a-Lent came to be linked with degraded notions of femininity in the early modern era. Shershow points, for instance, to the puppet's "metaphoric sense of a doll-like effeminacy and a corresponding but different sense of empty, passive materiality."[37] Shershow is, of course, not assigning traits of passivity, vacuity, and materiality to women, but tracing the social stereotypes about women that were linked to figures with analogous negatively valued attributes, such as the puppet. Associated throughout the play with negative stereotypes of femininity, Falstaff maintains the association himself in the final scene by making his mind a passive puppet.

Shershow captures in an insightful way the hierarchy of representation on display before an early modern London theatergoer and

the fluidity characteristic of stage representations of social order in disorder: "A London theatergoer had access to an intricate hierarchy of histrionic entertainment in which material puppets represented corporeal beings, boy players represented men and women, and adult players represented kings and clowns—the whole spectrum of social distinction."[38] In *Merry Wives*, the spectrum of representation outlined by Shershow twists and turns in and upon itself: a fat knight tries to hide from punishment by disguising himself as a withered old "witch"; a boy and a grown man (Robin, the page, and Falstaff, respectively) are rendered analogous to a puppet (the Jack-a-Lent); boy players represent women and fairies; and male players[39] portray wily wives who orchestrate the play's internal dramatization of the fairies under whose aegis each of the play's women realizes her desires.

The antitheatricalists used reform Christian doctrine as ammunition in their assaults on the blasphemous excesses of the stage, which were perceived as threats to national stability on all fronts: political, religious, and social. Fairies were implicated in the moralistic debate over the ethics of performance since they were renowned for their abilities to impersonate anything they chose, animate or not, for, at times, lewd and licentious purposes. Yet, the theatricality of fairies was the least of the religious reformers' concerns about continued belief in them. They were also uneasy about the potential challenge fairy belief posed to the primacy of the Christian tradition. Many reformers[40] perceived continued devotion to fairies and their erratic conduct as a threat to the propagation of Protestantism in all of its own varied permutations. Shakespeare dodged the religious implications of most of his plays' fairy elements by setting them in pre-Christian and, therefore, forgivably pagan worlds, or in places not yet under the sway of Protestant Reform. Not so the Windsor woods, the presence of the presumably late medieval Falstaff notwithstanding. Indeed, given Kristen Poole's lucid demonstration of the problematic religious import of Falstaff's character in the Henriad, his importation into the suggestively early modern world of the merry wives' Windsor may well have introduced yet another layer of religiopolitical subversion into the play. As Poole argues, Falstaff may well have conjured up not only the irascible Sir John Oldcastle, but also the fictive troublemaker Martin Marprelate.[41]

"Trib, Trib, fairies. Come and remember your parts"

John Penry, a Welsh Anglican educated at Oxford and Cambridge,[42] fought hard in the late sixteenth-century British Parlia-

ment to persuade the Queen and her councilors to look to the religious education of Wales. In his view, the Welsh clergy were so poorly schooled in official Protestant doctrine that they were risking the salvation of all of their parishioners. In particular, Penry took umbrage at the persistent loyalty of the Welsh clergy to beliefs both pagan and Catholic, construed as pagan because they could be linked to Catholicism. The "astonishing reuerence of the fairies" that such irresponsible pseudodivines had reputedly lodged "into the harts of our silly people" came under Penry's particular censure.[43] Central among the "silly people" Penry figures as susceptible to and prime advocates of fairy belief are women starved of the saving grace of Scripture because they spoke Welsh and did not understand the English Book of Common Prayer. Thus, the Welsh Hugh Evans sporting on the green with the women and children of Windsor, teaching them the ways of the ephemeral fairies, cut a figure with powerful religiopolitical resonance by the time *Merry Wives* was written and performed (probably not later than 1601).[44]

Penry appealed repeatedly to Queen Elizabeth I and her Parliament to intervene into the spiritual health of Wales. On February 28, 1587, Edward Dunn Lee and Job Throckmorton presented a petition of Penry's to Parliament begging that the gospel be openly preached in Wales in the vernacular and that lay theologians be permitted to lead worship, since the English bishops in Wales were so hopelessly corrupt. Lee and Throckmorton got into deep trouble for their pains. They, along with Penry, were ultimately accused in the Martin Marprelate controversy—a series of anonymous pamphlets that attacked as inadequate the reforms in the late sixteenth-century English church—and Lee was removed from his parliamentary commission for presenting the petition.[45] Penry fared far worse: he was executed.

I am going to quote a lengthy passage from Penry's work that demonstrates the sixteenth-century perception of the connection between fairy belief (and its promulgation) and women—in particular, women who assert authority in a self-evidently unruly manner—and between fairy belief and persistent Catholicism (or outright ungodliness). The full title of the treatise in question is *A treatise containing the aeqvity of an hvmble svpplication which is to be exhibited vnto hir Gracious Maiesty and this high Court of Parliament in the behalfe of the Countrey of Wales, that some order may be taken for the preaching of the Gospell among those people* (1587). In the midst of a passionate passage devoted to his observation that there are no truly godly men in Wales except those who have had the great good fortune to encoun-

ter Protestant doctrine in England, or through their own private religious studies, Penry attacks the abundant superstition in Wales:

> The rest of our people are either such as neuer think of anie religion true or false, plainely meere Atheists or stark blinded with superstition. The later are of 2 sorts. The first crue is obstinate idolaters that would fain be again in execrable Rome, & so hold for good diuinity whatsoeuer hath bin hatched in that sacrilegious nest. But these may doe what they wil with vs: for nether ciuil magistrat nor Bishop wil controul them. . . . Hence flow our swarmes of southsaiers, and enchanters, such as will not stick openly, to professe that they walke, on Tuesdaies, and Thursdaies at nights, with the fairies, of whom they brag themselues to haue their knowledge. These sonnes of Belial, who shuld die the death, Leuit. 20.6. haue stroken such an astonishing reuerence of the fairies, into the harts of our silly people, that they dare not name them, without honor. We cal them *bendith û mamme*, that is, such as haue deserved their mothers blessing. Now our people, wil neuer vtter, *bendith û mamme*, but they wil saie, *bendith û mamme û dhûn*, that is, their mothers blessing (which they account the greatest felicity that any creature can be capable of) light vpon them, as though they were not to be named without reuerence. Hence proceed open defending of Purgatory & the Real presence, praying vnto images &c. with other infinit monsters.[46]

Protestantism cannot take root in a Welsh soil polluted with superstitious belief in the fairies. This superstitious belief persists because ''silly people'' refuse to replace the maternal blessing associated with fairy beliefs with the patriarchal benedictions privileged in Christian doctrine. Instead, they continue to credit feminine blessings suggestive of Catholic worship of the Virgin Mary, or the image worship associated by reform Christians with prayers to the likewise Catholic saints or, worse still, pagan idols. Mother's blessings and Catholic dogma such as belief in purgatory or transubstantiation should be of little import to good Protestants.[47]

When one examines some of the texts in the Martin Marprelate controversy, it is not difficult to see why Penry's petition to allow Welsh preachers to spread the word of reform Christianity in Wales would have gotten him into trouble. Many of the fears he expressed about what was happening in Wales are quite similar to the complaints lodged against the incompetence of the clergy in England in the Martin Marprelate tracts. Perhaps Penry's insistence that the clergy in England were the shining light that all other British clergy should use as an example sounded too defensive. Consider, by way of comparison, the rant of ''J. P.'' in *Plaine Perceval the Peace-Maker of England; Being a Reply to Martin Mar-Prelate:*

> A Minister that hath any thing a fat benefice, and a full belly, will haue his Co-brother to assist him. And what must he be but either an halfepeny boy, or an idle craftsman, that shall serue for meate, drinke and cloth, a little tutoring in Diuinitie, and the reueration of a benefice, when it fauls, where his godfathers commendatory letters may preuaile. I could well like that men of some desert and imploiment should haue their assistants, so they were Preachers, but you shall not take them in that fault . . . by this *Leger-demaine* hath the Common-wealth been robd of Tailors, Shoomakers, and good Artificers, and the Church ouercharged with bad Ministers: which thanke God, I dare saie in their hearts (with that firehot Preacher) that they are so farre from the Romish Religion, as they cannot vnderstand a word of the Latine toong. I tell you, this is a miserie to heare, and a miserie to see: that such eager Callers for *Reformation*, should plant slips of their owne gathering: supplant Magistrates for wincking at it, and make the people beleeue, that they would haue it otherwise, with all their hearts.[48]

This sardonic criticism has many affinities with the more modulated critique lodged by Penry in his petition. While Penry tried to localize his complaints to Wales, they apparently resonated so powerfully with the Martin Marprelate attacks on England's own clergy that they did him in.

One of the ways in which reform Christians attacked Catholicism in early modern England, as is evident from Penry's rant, was to feminize it. Protestants did away with the Catholic significance attached to Mary, the saints (many of whom were women), and the religious sisterhood and scoffed at the elaborate ostentation of the Catholic Mass (with its emphasis on ritual ornamentation and display) as effeminate. Frances Dolan has demonstrated how, in relegating all of these female figures or elements such as costuming and "decoration" that were negatively linked to women in the culture at large to Catholicism, reform Christians in effect feminized the entire religion. She notes, "Some early modern writers connected Catholic women not just to illiteracy and materialism but also to superstition, oral transmission, and the occult. This set of associations, in which old wives' tales and old papists' tales are the same works to discredit Catholicism and relegate it to the past."[49] The connection forged between fairy belief and Catholicism simply reinforced this trend, as fairies were associated with women, their domestic work, and stereotyped images of their moral vicissitudes.

A number of elements converge by the last act of *Merry Wives* to feminize the Welsh parson Hugh Evans. He is the only adult male who participates in the fairy subterfuge that brings about the play's comic resolution. As on Shakespeare's stage, all of the other fairy

parts are taken by young boys or women played by young boys (including Anne Page and Mistress Quickly). While everyone is amenable to the wives' fairy plot, he takes a particularly active role in it and is therefore closely aligned with the women by the final scene. As is the wrongfully abused Mistress Ford, Evans is paid little heed by the central male characters in the play, who identify him as an outsider by virtue of his Welsh origins and poke malicious fun at his inability to handle that phallic token of masculine bravery the sword.[50] However, something odd happens at the conclusion of the play. Evans's fairy antics breed no ill will toward him. In fact, his success as the leader of the cast of fairy actors serves to incorporate him into the Windsor community with a level of acceptance that he has failed to attain in the performance of his role as its religious leader.

Juliette Wood observes that ''Englishmen and Scots who lived in Wales were thought to be fairies.''[51] Given the emphasis placed on Evans's Welsh nationality throughout the play and his subsequent role as the leader of a band of child actors impersonating fairies, one might be moved to wonder whether this assumption did not also work in the opposite direction: were Welshmen living in England thought to be fairies? Evans's marginal status within the Windsor community is underscored throughout the play by Shakespeare's decision to write his lines in an approximation of Welsh dialect that aims at every opportunity for crude puns. It seems likely that the popular belief in foreigners as fairies stemmed from their differences—in language, in diet, in dress—from those of the community into which they had immigrated. Differences in speech, food, and physical appearance also served as fairy identifiers[52]—a fact evinced by the costumes the wives plan for their fairy band and by Falstaff's response to his fairy tormentors.

Falstaff is lured into the fairy trap with the promise of a romantic assignation with the merry wives, Ford and Page. He is asked to disguise himself as another figure of folklore, the ghost of Herne the Hunter, whose presence in the woods around Windsor was attested to as recently as 1926. Mistress Page recounts the ''old tale'' associated with Herne the Hunter in the scene in which she and Mistress Ford delineate their plan for shaming Falstaff to their husbands and Parson Hugh Evans:

> There is an old tale goes that Herne the hunter,
> Sometime a keeper here in Windsor Forest,
> Does all the wintertime, at still midnight,
> Walk round about an oak, with great ragg'd horns;
> And there he blasts the tree, and takes the cattle,

> And makes milch kine yield blood, and shakes a chain
> In a most hideous and dreadful manner.
> You have heard of such a spirit, and well you know
> The superstitious idle-headed eld
> Received and did deliver to our age
> This tale of Herne the hunter for a truth.
>
> (IV.iv.27–37)

Blasting trees, taking cattle, and making the dairy cows yield blood instead of milk were all activities ascribed to fairies and witches in early modern England, in addition to other figures of folklore such as Herne. As the fairies were believed to visit their afflictions more frequently on ''sluttish'' maids, Herne the Hunter is associated here with illicit sexuality, the horns on his head a visual signifier of the cuckold. Although Mistress Page can glibly tell this tale, she does not countenance it. She attributes it, rather, to the older, superstitious generation—a group that includes Falstaff by virtue of his terrified reaction to the fairies that assault him and the frequent references to his advancing years.[53] For example, upon receiving a *billet-doux* from Falstaff, Mistress Page exclaims in horror, ''O wicked, wicked world! One that is well-nigh worn to pieces with age, to show himself a young gallant!'' (II.i.20–22).

Surrounded by Sir Hugh and his band of child fairies, Falstaff combines his perception of the outsider status of both Welsh people and fairies and locates the respective bases of these positions in linguistic and dietary differences. Falstaff's initial response to the army of faux fairies that sets upon him in the Windsor woods focuses on the power granted fairy language: ''He that speaks to them shall die'' (V.v.46). He then combines his detection of Evans's Welsh accent through the parson's fairy disguise with his fear of the metamorphic capabilities of fairies and popular ethnic slurs about the Welsh love of cheese: ''Heavens defend me from that Welsh fairy, / lest he transform me to a piece of cheese!'' (V.v.81–82). In fairy disguise or in his parson's weeds, Evans is ever the outsider to the male world of Windsor. In his alignment with the wives of Windsor, however, Evans finally gets the upper hand of the jeering Falstaff in a way that he never has at any other point in the play. Explicitly linking the fairies with Christian faith in the precise manner that Penry so feared, Evans confronts Falstaff once the fairy deception has been revealed: ''Sir John Falstaff, serve Got, and leave your desires, and fairies will not pinse you'' (V.v.128–29). Falstaff replies, ''You have the start of me. I am dejected. I am not able to answer the Welsh flannel'' (V.v.159–62). This is the first time in the play that Falstaff is not able to ''answer'' Evans.[54]

According to Jeanne Addison Roberts, there is some evidence suggesting that *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a Halloween play. Halloween, the pagan holiday that immediately precedes the Christian celebration of All Saint's Day, marks the transition from autumn to winter and, in early modern England, was believed to be "a night on which witches, fairies, and hobgoblins were thought to roam freely. . . . Having had their fling, the goblins and elves [we]re prepared to be saints on the morrow."[55] Though acceptance of *Merry Wives* as a Halloween play is not necessary to the points I wish to make about it, an October 31 date for the play would add another element to the play's theological ambiguities. Since the wives stage their fairy playlet to purge themselves, their families, and all of Windsor of Falstaff's licentious and corrupt influence, it would be significant to stage this purgation process at midnight on October 31, the threshold between mischievous license and saintly conduct. Such a date for the play's action also adds resonance to Parson Evans's prominent role as leader of the fairies and their punishments, since it temporarily casts the community's ostensibly Christian, spiritual leader as the head of a band of rambunctious spirits unleashed in a woodland pagan space. Chaos reigns in fairyland all year long, but fairy chaos invades the mortal realm in a pervasive way at only a few points in the year, and All Hallow's Eve is one of these times.

Shakespeare potentially invokes a triple-headed hydra of religious controversies in depicting a Welsh parson as the stage manager of a troop of child actor fairies. Wales, the theater, and fairyland were three locales that had proved resistant to conquest by reform Christianity at the time of his writing. Shakespeare scholars have devoted a great deal of attention in recent years to the spectacle likely created by cross-dressed heroines (re)united with their male lovers on the stage while still dressed as boys. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* offers a heroine who elopes disguised as a fairy leaving her two undesirable suitors to abscond with village boys also dressed up for the fairy exposé of Falstaff. When the elopement is revealed, Shakespeare offers the odd spectacle of three boys dressed as fairies married to grown men appealing to a religious leader hailing from the seat of suspect Protestantism, Wales, who is also dressed as a fairy while dispensing theological wisdom that links adherence to God to avoidance of fairy punishment. This would have been a holy horror to a theologian of Penry's ilk. The public nature of the Martin Marprelate controversy and the subsequent convictions rendered Penry's concerns about the theological integrity of Welsh parsons and the threat posed to the success of religious reform in Wales by persistent belief in fairies equally widespread. This final scene likely had an effect on

Shakespeare's audience that is lost on audiences and scholars today who choose to join Theseus's party and dismiss the fairies as "airy nothing" (*MND* V.i.16).

Staging in Hugh Evans an explicit example of Penry's fears would have been a dangerous enterprise for Shakespeare since Penry himself was executed for the blasphemy and sedition that were seen to inhere in his charges of Protestant theological infirmity in Wales and his recommended treatments for it. It is more likely that Shakespeare is spoofing Penry's concerns in the figure of Evans, who dispenses more theatrical direction and fairy lore than Christian doctrine over the course of the play. As with his ambiguous references to the sisterhood in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Shakespeare leaves a loophole for himself should any government censors have questioned his portrayal of Hugh Evans by keeping open the possibility that the parson inhabits fifteenth-century Catholic Windsor and not late sixteenth-century Protestant Windsor. Theatergoers initially met Falstaff as a companion of the heir to King Henry IV's crown—in other words, under a monarchy still loyal to the Roman church. His presence in this play ambiguously placed in a fictive Windsor offers the possibility that the play looks back to a time when the Catholicism with which fairies were linked was the custom of the country. Indeed, one of the many distinctions between the Q and F texts lies in a crucial speech that Falstaff has in the final fairy scene. In Q, Falstaff while being pinched delivers an agonized speech that links the fairies to the realm of the dead and calls forth "the mad Prince of Wales." He gasps: " 'Sblood the Fairies hath made a ghost of me: / What hunting at this time of night? / Ile lay my life the mad Prince of *Wales* / Is stealing his father's Deare."[56] This direct invocation of "the mad Prince" seems designed to remind the audience (and the censors) that this is medieval Windsor, and not Elizabethan Windsor. Interesting, too, that this speech—almost expository in its chronological import—does not appear in the F text, authorized and published after the death of Queen Elizabeth, who regarded Penry as a nemesis. Given the Elizabethan topicality of much else in the play, however, this is a tenuous means of mitigating the play's religious topicality at best. Arguably, here as well as in the Henriad, "Falstaff. . . . plays the role of satirist even as he is the object of satire."[57]

"Queen of All the Fairies"

The Merry Wives of Windsor is a troublesome text because the 1602 quarto differs substantially from the 1623 Folio.[58] While I have been

using the F text, I will take this opportunity to highlight some of the distinctions between the two texts in the final fairy scene.[59] In the Folio text, Mistress Page scripts the scene that her daughter, Anne, will play in Windsor Forest: ''My Nan shall be the queen of all the fairies, / Finely attired in a robe of white'' (IV.iv.70–71). It is Page's idea that Anne should join in playing a fairy part in the quarto text, although he does not specify that she will play the Fairy Queen as is the case in F: ''Tis excellent, and my daughter *Anne*, / Shall like a little Fayrie be disguised.''[60] In both Q and F, Page has an immediate aside in which he indicates that Anne's white fairy disguise will be Slender's cue to sneak her away from the group and marry her. Mistress Page, for her part, intends that Dr. Caius should make off with the fairy-garbed Anne. In a bit of maternal assertiveness about marital matters not entirely acceptable in early modern England,[61] Mistress Page swears that only Caius has her ''good will, / And none but he, to marry with Nan Page. / That Slender, though well landed, is an idiot; / And he my husband best of all affects'' (IV.v.83–86).

Class issues swirl around both Anne's marital prospects and Falstaff's incorrigible courting of the wives. Page is drawn to Slender and his landholdings, and he objects to Anne's choice, Fenton, on the grounds of his upper-crust court affiliations and his wild, debauched lifestyle. Page swears, ''The gentleman is of no having. He kept company with the wild / Prince and Poins. He is of too high a region'' (III.ii.64–66). Indeed, Fenton confesses to Anne that her father's fears that he is nothing more than a gold digger initially had some basis in reality: ''I will confess thy father's wealth / Was the first motive that I wooed thee, Anne'' (III.iv.13–14). However, since that time he has fallen in love with her and is no longer drawn only to her finer financial points.

According to Mistress Quickly, Mistress Ford has had other sexual propositions from members of court whose rank trumps Falstaff's by a long shot. In F she tells Falstaff:

> The best courtier of them all, when the court lay at Windsor, could never have brought her to such a canary. Yet there has been knights, and lords, and gentlemen with their coaches, I warrant you, coach after coach, letter after letter, gift after gift . . . they could never get an eye-wink of her. . . . And yet there has been earls, nay, which is more, pensioners, but I warrant you all is one with her.
>
> (II.ii.59–63, 68, 73–74)[62]

"All is one" with Mistress Ford because she dismisses all comers alike, regardless of their social position, remaining true to her husband, who lives his days livid with jealousy despite her faithfulness.

Quickly's suggestion that Mistress Ford has had other suitors is important because it suggests the extent to which the wives maintain control over their own sexuality. The wives' exertion of control and ownership over their own sexuality would have been perceived as subversive in a culture in which chastity was sold to the highest bidder by the father and then held to be the exclusive property of the husband. The success the wives enjoy in their shenanigans with Falstaff makes it clear that they could put one over on their husbands and pursue private sexual intrigues if they chose to do so. The fact that they do not choose to do so does not mitigate their control over the distribution of their sexual favors.

Anne Page, for one, certainly seems to have learned a good deal about female sexual autonomy from her mother. In a very frank scene in F that at times recalls Juliet's conversation with the Nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*,[63] Anne reveals her awareness of the details of the marital negotiations centered on her person and her father's money and very forthrightly offers her views on the matter. Faced with the simple-minded Slender, Anne says in an aside (which is often directed at Mistress Quickly in performance): "This is my father's choice. / O, what a world of vile ill-favored faults / Looks handsome in three hundred pounds a year!" (III.iv.31–33). Shortly thereafter, Fenton pleads with Mistress Page to take up his cause with her husband, and Anne begs, "Good Mother, do not marry me to yond fool [Slender]" (III.iv.83). Mistress Page authoritatively asserts, "I mean it not; I seek you a better husband" (III.iv.84). When Mistress Quickly identifies this ideal spouse in Anne's ear as "my master, Master Doctor" (III.iv.85), Anne groans, "Alas, I had rather be set quick i' the earth / And bowled to death with turnips!" (III.iv.86–87).

Not content to meet such a fate, Anne asks Fenton to "seek my father's love," but "If opportunity and humblest suit / Cannot attain it, why, then—hark you hither" (III.iv.21–23). Judith Kollmann identifies Anne as "a single-minded and determined character," pointing out the agency that this passage suggests: "She [Anne] already has alternate plans."[64] Indeed, the young Anne reveals how fully she has inherited her mother's willful spirit by staging a countersubplot of her own design in the play's fairy finale that completely upstages the fairy wedding scenes that her parents have each scripted for her.[65] The play's celebration of the Windsor wives' triumphant dominion is disrupted only by Anne's sly dodge of her

mother's subversive plot. If one of the wives had to be beaten at her own game in the play, it is significant that only another woman—and a representative of the younger generation—is able to accomplish the feat.[66] Although many critics are quick to point out that Fenton is the one given stage time regarding the elopement plans he and Anne have made,[67] this does not preclude the possibility that Anne plays a vital role in their formulation.

In the scene that refers to the young couple's plot, Fenton asks the Host to help make arrangements with the vicar to marry him and Anne and to wait for them himself at the church to serve as a witness to their union (IV.vi.48–51). He precedes his request with a lengthy description of the plans that each of Anne's parents has laid for her elopement with either Slender or Dr. Caius. His detailed narrative is peppered throughout with indicators of Anne's agency in their counterplot. Of her father's plan he notes, "She hath consented" (IV.vi.25). After describing Mistress Page's plan, Fenton observes, "To this her mother's plot / She, seemingly obedient, likewise hath / Made promise to the Doctor" (IV.vi.32–34). Even the Host's marveling query in the midst of Fenton's account—"Which means *she* to deceive, father or mother?" (emph. added IV.vi.46)—acknowledges Anne's control of the situation.

Indeed, since Anne is the one who is privy to her parents' conflicting plans for her altar-bound escape from the fairy humiliation of Falstaff, she is in the best position to suggest how she and Fenton might frustrate both of their schemes with a third plot of their own. As Constance Jordan points out, Anne's position would have been a precarious one on either hand since "a woman had reason to fear both a clandestine and an arranged marriage: the first justified if not actually encouraged her seduction or abduction, particularly if she had money or social status; the second made her the pawn of her parents' dynastic ambitions. Both therefore denied her the right to exercise her own discretion and conscience as to whom she would be required to serve and obey as husband."[68] Anne is faced with the unique situation of choosing between two different marriages furtively foisted upon her by each of her parents that would also be clandestine. Given her options, a clandestine marriage based on her own choice, a man whom she loves and trusts, appears to be the wisest move.

Anne marries defiantly and she marries for love. As do her female elders, the Windsor wives, Anne relies on deception to allot her sexual favors as she sees fit. As they do, too, she relies on fairy subterfuge to publicly vindicate her conduct. Fairies were culturally believed to support love matches; hence, it is significant that Anne

accomplishes all of this while she is disguised as a fairy and while her blissfully oblivious guardians are busy laughing at Falstaff, pinched and burned in a fairy ring. Not only does Anne Page succeed in wedding her chosen love in defiance of both of her parents, but her defiant move exposes the manipulative, scheming tactics that Mistress Page has been using in an attempt to assert the sort of authority reserved for early modern men over her daughter's marital partner.[69] Mistress Page makes her power perfectly clear when Fenton and Anne return to Herne's Oak newly married. In Q, it is Mistress Page who demands of Anne, "How now daughter, where haue you bin?" to which Anne glibly replies, "At Curch forsooth."[70] Steven Urkowitz opines that "her simple answer to her mother's question reveals through its witty compression that she no longer is to be controlled by her parents."[71] Not only is she no longer controlled by them, she quite literally no longer answers to them since Mistress Page clearly wants to know far more than what she has literally asked—she wants to know not only where Anne has been but what she has been doing.

Although it requires some cajoling by the Fords, the Pages eventually come around and accept Anne's marriage. Significantly, in Q it is Mistress Page who first accepts Fenton and gives her daughter up to him in a manner reserved for the paternal parent even in twenty-first-century Christian wedding ceremonies: "Here M. Fenton, take her, and God giue thee ioy."[72] In F, Page is the first both to question Anne and to accept her marriage to Fenton. Furthermore, in F Anne asks her parents for pardon. Urkowitz drives home the significance of the differences between Anne's portrayals in Q and F: "In sharp juxtaposition to the action called for in Q1, no parent even answers Anne's ingratiating plea for pardon, no one embraces her with good wishes, and no one other than her husband, no momma nor poppa nor neighbor nor pedagogue nor prowling fat fool nor even postmaster's boy, lends her a kind word of affirmation for her daring revolt."[73] Despite the differences in the parental responses the two texts depict, both cohere in depicting Anne as the agent of a "daring revolt." While women come out on top in the final scene in both versions of the text, F seems to give more sway to the younger generation. Mistress Page emerges as the most spectacular example of domestic intransigence in Q, while Anne cuts a more notable figure in F.[74]

Since neither of the Pages' plans for Anne's marriage works, they are forced to deal openly with both one another and their daughter in the same public setting in which the long-married Fords celebrate their renewed commitment to mutual trust. This component has

been sorely lacking in their relationship because of the maniacally jealous Ford, who must humbly acknowledge and address his shortcoming before both wife and community. After the buck basket incident, Ford acknowledges his jealousy before his wife, the Pages, Evans, and Caius: "'Tis my fault, Master Page. I suffer for it" (III.iii.198). It is only in the last two acts, though, when he is colluding with his wife in the fairy plot that he concedes how *she* has suffered for his "fault," and not until the fairy scene itself that he acknowledges his folly (including his disguise as Master Brook) to the entire community.

The supernaturally charged play acting that marks the final scene is based on a complex matrix of gender-based role playing far more nuanced than the gender role reversals explored through the standard early modern plot device of comedic cross-dressing. This fairy-inflected scene of marital union, set in the woods and overseen by fairies, recalls the similar dénouement in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* Carroll points to the conglomeration of boy actors, cross-dressed characters, and fairies in the comic resolution of *Merry Wives*, noting the audience's complicity in the act V deception staged by Anne Page. Covering her own tracks, she has dispatched both of her suitors with Windsor village boys disguised as fairies. Dr. Caius reenters with his boy bride spluttering, "I ha' married *un garçon*, a boy."[75] As Carroll notes, when Caius and Slender enter grousing about the fact that they have run off to be married to young boys, they "abruptly remind us as well that Anne *is* a boy—a boy actor—and the paradox strikes us anew as Anne and Fenton enter immediately after Caius and Slender's speeches."[76] Carroll does not pursue this point, but this scene also suggests the nature of the boy actor's body, used to portray not only women, but fairies. In the internal fairy play, most of the fairies are played by Windsor children, and usually such parts would have been taken by boy actors on the early modern stage. As the final salvo in the play's consistent interrogation of socially prescribed gender roles and the conduct appropriate to them, in the final act two of these boy actors play not only boys playing fairies, but boys posing as Windsor's hottest commodity on the marriage market, the "fairy" bride Nan Page. This makes of the comic conclusion of *Merry Wives* a positively head-swimming scene of boy actors who play both fairies and women habitually anyway taking on the layered roles of boys portraying women disguised as fairies who turn out "really" to be boys after all. A contemporary audience would have been looking at actors playing two of the roles for which they were known at the same time. It would have been "understandable" for audience members that Caius and Slender could have been

duped into thinking that the fairies they took off were women, because on one level (the theatrical level) the young male body had been culturally coded to be deciphered as either fairy or female, both fairy and female.

Perhaps the ultimate pardon for any indiscretions that might have been perceived in this play lies in the link forged between Windsor's fairy queen and the reigning "fairy queen" at the time, Elizabeth I. Suggesting the Spenserian connection between Elizabeth, Queen of England, and Gloriana, Queen of Faery, the fairy queen whom the wives conjure purges her court of Falstaff's lechery just as the wives have sought to drive it from their community. Q assigns Mistress Quickly the speech of the fairy monarch;[77] she directs her spritely minions:

> About, about!
> Search Windsor Castle, elves, within and out.
> Strew good luck, aufs, on every sacred room,
> That it may stand till the perpetual doom
> In state as wholesome as in state 'tis fit,
> Worthy the owner and the owner it.
>
> (V.v.54–59)[78]

The cultural association of Queen Elizabeth with the fairy queen, combined with this fairy queen's keen interest in Windsor Castle, implicitly invoke Elizabeth's "benediction" on the play's action. Lest there be any doubt about what has transpired, "Our radiant Queen," who "hates sluts and sluttery" (V.v.45), appears to sanction it. If the wives are not able to make the men of Windsor see and accept them on their own terms in the domestic sphere (the buck basket) or in the world of "witchcraft" (the old woman of Brainford), it is significant that they finally carry their point (all of them—including Anne) when they call on the graces of the "Fairy Queen."[79] As several recent analyses of the conjunction of Queen Elizabeth I and the fairy queen make clear,[80] however, this aspect of the plot's resolution was potentially as problematic as a Windsor parson with intimate interests in both theater and fairy belief. For one thing, since at least the fourteenth century the fairy queen had been associated in popular lore (including the ballad tradition) with illicit, rapacious sexuality. Indeed, conjuring the fairy queen to oversee the exoneration of a trio of women who have all been implicated in varying degrees of sexual impropriety could have heightened the comedy of this final scene in a manner quite unflattering to Queen Elizabeth.

And yet if Evans is a parodic portrait of the pagan hybrid of Protestantism that Penry so feared in Wales, it makes sense to invoke Elizabeth for the play's fairy dénouement since it was her administration that executed Penry for impudently presuming to tell her how to practice religious governance in Wales.[81] Sir Hugh Evans does double duty as both a parody of what Penry feared for Wales and a means of lampooning actual clerical shortcomings. The faux fairy queen in the play—particularly if, as specified in Q, she is played by the double-entendre-spewing broker Mistress Quickly—also does double duty: as a cultural invocation of the precise species of sexual libertinism with which misogynists such as the Master Ford of acts I–III sullied women's characters (lowercase fairy queen) and as the paragon of chastity and judicious governance (the Spenserian Fairy Queen, Elizabeth). Evans captures the double valence of the wives' behavior and the cultural figure invoked to oversee it in the stamp of approval he awards their fairy plan: ''It is admirable pleasures, and ferry honest knaueries.''[82] ''Ferry'' here connotes Shakespeare's jingoistic approximation of Evans's Welsh accent. However, the phrase ''ferry honest knaveries'' also aurally captures the authorizing role played by the fairies in popular narratives about them, and in the appropriation of these narratives in the drama. Shakespeare grapples more directly in *Merry Wives* than in his other fairy plays with the politicoreligious debates of the day, which often relied on fairy lore to make points about sectarian reform. He also engages in this play in one of his most direct and sustained interrogations of early modern gender roles and rules, permitting a whole cohort of rebellious women to have their way under a fairy authorization that they script and stage. As are the fairies themselves, best seen between one eye blink and the next, Shakespeare's religious and sociopolitical sensibilities emerge only in glimpses.

3

The Fairy Quean: Fairyland Meets the Fifth Monarchy in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*

In 1613, a now very rare tract appeared in London detailing *THE severall notorious and lewd Cousanages of John West and Alice West, falsely called the King and Queene of Fayries.* Playing in real life the part Ben Jonson scripted for Dol Common in the subject of this chapter, *The Alchemist*, Alice West ingratiates herself with a female servant of one Thomas Moore of Hammersmith (just outside London proper) and

> communicates to her a strange revelation, how that the fayrie king and queene had appeared to her in a vision, saying they had a purpose to bestow great summes of gold upon this man and this woman [the Moores], which by her meanes and directions was undoubtedly to be compast: in which atchievement, there was nothing so necessary as secrecie, for if it were revealed to any save them three whom it did essentially concerne, they should not onely hazard their good fortune, but incurre the danger of the fayries, and so consequently be open to great mishapes, and fearfull disasters.[1]

Familiar elements thus far in this "fairy tale" are fairy access to vast wealth, the stealth necessary in acquiring it, and the pitfalls that await those who risk the wrath of the sprites by revealing their secrets. Note, too, that while it seemingly never occurs to the maid to try to bilk her employers out of their fairy windfall, Alice West lacked no ingenuity in dreaming up ways to relieve members of the comfortable classes of their liquid assets, to her own gain.

The Moore household proved so susceptible to this fictive fairy scheme that they ultimately surrendered forty pounds to the Wests before Moore became sufficiently suspicious of the complete lack of return on his investment to demand some greater surety of its coming to fruition. At this juncture, the resourceful Alice West "drue the maid into a dark celler, and by some strong illusion shewed two in strange habits, whom she termed the K. and Q. of fayries, and by

them, so much imagined treasure, that the maid justified before the bench there could not be so litle as seventeen hundred thousand pound, al which this cheatresse affirmed was for her master, but she was not suffred to beare any part of it away, because the time was not come, and the ceremonies not yet ended, after performance of which the treasure was to be tendred.''[2]

Every bit the artist of improvisation that the Windsor wives proved themselves to be in warding off the greedy, lecherous grasping of Falstaff, Alice West staged an impromptu fairy playlet, starring two of fairyland's most popular characters, its monarchs, for her dupes.[3] The Wests may have stood accused as a proto–Bonnie and Clyde for this feint, but note the pamphlet account's insistent focus on two women: the grasping ne'er-do-well, Alice, and the naive maid who dreams at night of fairy wealth even as the city that will offer the nature spirits no dense, leafy woods to inhabit grows up around her. Nor was this fairy-inflected swindle entirely unique; Keith Thomas reports:

> The late Elizabethan and Jacobean periods witnessed a series of episodes in which professional tricksters extracted money from their victims under the pretence of investing it with the fairies. Judith Philips, a London cunning woman, was whipped through the City in 1595 after being convicted for extracting large sums of money from gullible clients prepared to pay for the privilege of meeting the Queen of the Fairies. . . . An even closer approximation to the fraud portrayed in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist* occurred a few years earlier, when Sir Anthony Ashley and his brother were involved in a Chancery suit arising from their efforts to extract money from a dupe in return for their promise to marry him to the Queen of the Fairies.[4]

Both Jonson and the impostors he used as models for his characters were drawing upon the sociocultural energy that swirled around popular fairy belief in staging their economic exploitations. Theatrical invocations of fairy belief such as Jonson's relied on familiarity with not only the lore among audience members who had recently migrated to London with rural belief in fairies fresh in their minds but also pamphlet accounts of those deluded by big-city cons like that perpetrated by the Wests. Thus, Jonson's fairy satire both drew upon audience knowledge of rural fairy traditions and perpetuated the condescending urban attitude toward those who still clung to such traditions.

The Merry Wives of Windsor and *The Alchemist* are both seriously funny plays. Jonson uses fairy disguise as a key element in a much more radical interrogation of sociocultural and religiopolitical

norms in *The Alchemist* than we have seen in the preceding chapter's discussion of *Merry Wives*. His fairy queen is one-third of a crew of criminals who dabble in every sort of scam that early modern Londoners could imagine. Jonson's irreverence with respect to Puritan dogma is matched by the irreverence with which he treats the fairy queen and all of the significance that fairy lore had taken on in early seventeenth-century religious debate. There can be little doubt that he was also poking characteristically Jonsonian rude fun at the recently deceased monarch associated with the fairy queen, Elizabeth, in playing up the lascivious sexuality and openhanded financial favors often associated with the fairy monarch by making the woman who impersonates her a social-climbing whore.[5] The critical heritage has not been kind to this character, Dol Common. Although she is an integral part of the trio of rogues at the center of the play's action, she is often seen as rather more of a third wheel than a necessary part of the "venture tripartite."[6] Her centrality to the plot emerges more clearly when one reads the play with a full understanding of the sociocultural significance and religiopolitical import of Dol's closely intertwined roles-within-the-role as the fairy queen and a crazed Protestant sectarian.

In *The Alchemist*, Jonson creates fairy space out of the thin air in the middle of London through Dol, Face, and Subtle's inventive theatrics. The trio of rogues have taken over the home of Lovewit, a London gentleman who has fled the city in fear of the plague, in order to swindle as many gullible city fools as they can lay hands upon before the master returns. In *The Alchemist*, the woman cast in the role of the fairy queen, the suggestively named Dol Common, actually engages in the sort of unconventional sexual relationship to which Falstaff tries to tempt Mistresses Ford and Page in *Merry Wives*. She is a prostitute whose sexual favors are shared by her two pimps.[7] There is a menacing aura about Jonson's invocation of the fairy queen in this play, as she is summoned for the express purpose of bestowing a blessing upon a familiar spirit, which will supposedly help a half-wit hustler to his fairy fortune. Familiar spirits were, in the early modern popular consciousness, the satellites of witches and devils and were occasionally conflated with fairies in witchcraft depositions.[8] The frequent mention of fairies in witchcraft trials suggests the ambiguous position they held in the early modern spiritual schema. However, the fact that convictions seemed to rest on references to devil's sabbats or witch's covens indicates that consorting with fairies alone did not constitute a capital offense.[9]

Exhibiting a remarkable degree of comic economy, Ben Jonson explores contemporary concerns with appropriate gender behavior,

theatricality, and religious reform in his wickedly funny depiction of a whore who pretends to be both the fairy queen and a mad mystic. Jonson's play is saturated with contemporary relevance not only in its send-up of rural fairy beliefs, but also in its black comedy use of the plague and its setting in Blackfriars—a London neighborhood where Puritans lived in uneasy proximity to the very theaters they railed against in sermons and pamphlet treatises.[10] Dol engages in fairy theatrics to dupe both Dapper, her presumptive changeling-nephew, and Face, her presumptive partner in crime.[11] All of the illicit activities in which Dol, Face, and Subtle engage are linked in some way to Jonson's satirical exploitation of Puritan dogma. Puritans, along with many of their less dogmatic Protestant peers, dismissed belief in fairies as blasphemous and ungodly.

Katherine Briggs singles out Puritans, specifically, for regarding fairies as execrable creatures: "The Puritans of the seventeenth century had no doubt at all . . . that Hobgoblins and Brownies, like Ghosts and Black Dogs, were imps from Hell. . . . The general Puritan belief was that all fairies were devils."[12] Briggs assigns a religious inflection to the shifts in early modern attitudes toward fairies and locates it with the Puritans specifically. This has important implications for a play such as *The Alchemist*, in which Jonson both lampoons Puritan beliefs and plays upon Puritans' worst fears. Jonson enjoys quite a deal of fun at the Puritans' expense by having Dol the prostitute impersonate in rapid succession both the fairy queen and a gentlewoman run mad with studying biblical genealogy.

According to Richard Harp, there is some critical precedent for dating the action of *The Alchemist* on November 1, All Saints' Day;[13] this is interesting, considering the similar possibility that *Merry Wives* is a Halloween play.[14] As Anne Barton notes, "There is nothing restrained, ordered or balanced about life in *The Alchemist*, and no suggestions are put forward as to how any reforms in that direction might be affected. The play stares hard at chaos, with fascination far more than censure or disgust."[15] Herford and Simpson provide an in-text rationale for dating *The Alchemist*'s action at the end of October or beginning of November as well. Citing the passage in which the Puritans Ananias and Tribulation Wholesome consult the alchemist, Subtle, about the success of his efforts at developing the philosopher's stone for them, Herford and Simpson note that "Subtle, in III.ii.129–30, reckons that the brethren will have to wait 'some fifteene dayes' before 'the *Magisterium* will be perfected.' This, Ananias reckons, means 'about the second day, of the third weeke, In the ninth month.' . . . If the months are to be reckoned from March . . . this date would be November 16th, and the date of the action No-

vember 1st.''[16] Jonson's relentlessly ruthless depiction of the greed of the hypocritical Puritans would also take on added force if the ''philosopher's stone'' that will give their money-grubbing fingers the Midas touch were to be completed on All Saints' Day, a holiday associated directly with the spiritual intercessors implicated in so many of the abuses that reform Christians cited as Catholic corruptions. Prayers to saints established them as intermediaries between the Christian faithful and God, often for the purpose of saving those souls trapped in purgatory, a realm also associated with fairy belief.

(Fairy) Quean for a Day

Kathleen McLuskie distinguishes between the means of production of a theatrical text and the conditions of those means in a manner useful for discussing dramatic texts such as *The Alchemist*, which is so firmly entrenched in the sociocultural milieu it depicts. She explains: ''The means of production of a theatrical text are the theatrical conventions and the source material which enable it to take its particular form while the conditions of the means of production are the theatres and companies which produced it, together with the surrounding historical circumstances which made its production viable.''[17] Such distinctions have particular relevance for a play such as *The Alchemist*, in which Jonson deliberately and repeatedly underscores the theatrical nature of the roles of his central characters. Indeed, Jonson's play is a unique cultural artifact for the insight that it offers into the theatrical practices of his day.[18]

Although Jonson accomplishes in *The Alchemist* theatrical ends similar to those of other fairy comedies (in terms of social critique and exploration of alternatives to sociocultural institutions and norms),[19] he does so by emphasizing negative cultural notions of fairies and their theatrical representations. There is no moment of social restoration or even reformation in *The Alchemist* as there is in ''straight'' fairy comedies, such as *Merry Wives*. Donald Gertmenian asserts that ''moral order . . . is effectively absent from both world and language of *The Alchemist*.'' Gertmenian finds that Jonson revels in the vitality of his roguish characters and that ''no moral order emerges to choke vitality off.'' Ultimately, Jonson offers ''no moral criticism of the image of living presented by the play.''[20] Fairy comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* typically employed fairies as part of a Saturnalian subplot in which the controversies of the main characters could be resolved, often in ways utterly out of keeping with social convention. Fairy-

aligned social subversives (such as Anne Page and the Windsor wives) can both resist and cooperate with social standards if the community is willing to accept their creative alternatives to societal norms governing courtship, marriage, and labor culturally construed to be gender linked.

Jonson satirizes not only theatrical assumptions about the dramatic function of fairy characters, but also urban issues of his day, such as the antitheatrical controversy, the chicanery of urban criminals, and the hypocrisy of the leading religious reform movements. There are several explicit references to fairies in the play that Jonson exploits for comic potential. However, the amorphousness, changeability, and moral ambiguity of the fairies are subtly suggested in all of the play's satirical subplots. In the prologue to *The Alchemist*, Jonson mentions the bawdry that has been "all the rage" on the stage, flowing from the "spleen" of the comic writers. Jonson professes to find himself (and his moral aims) above that even as he introduces a play that could serve as the archetype for scatalogical humor and scathing satire. The play, which stares with unflinching, dry humor at the vices of commercial, capitalist London, also faces down the accusations leveled by the antitheatricalists at the early modern stage, its supporters, and habitués by playing up the very possibilities for deception and manipulation they fearfully located in the theater.[21] There are many references to the stage, the theater, playwrights, and so on, in the play as well as overblown theatricality within the structure of the play itself. Subtle, Face, and Dol each play multiple roles requiring frequent costume changes about which Face at one point complains.[22] Face takes the parts of Jeremy the housekeeper, a Captain, a servant to the alchemist named Lungs, and others, while Dol engages in the sexual theatrics of prostitution and impersonates a crazed mystic as well as the fairy queen. They are performing throughout the performance—the play is structured as a series of plays within plays in many ways.[23] The three central characters are often trapped between two scenes, playing one part in the room that they are in and another in their shouted conversation through the door, or out of the window. This theatrical chaos contributes to the existing confusion of an already convoluted plot.

On the level of plot the play does double duty in many ways: it offers an internal scathing satire of Puritanism in the ridiculous, extreme characterizations provided of its practitioners, but at the same time pays sarcastic homage to Puritan fears of the evils of theatricality by depicting performance exploited to achieve criminal extremes the like of which few antitheatricalists dreamed. All of this is conveyed via the very artistic vehicle that Jonson casts in a criminal con-

text in his prologue: a popular play. One must, paradoxically, expose oneself to the theater's evils in order to see Jonson's over-the-top, satirical ''example'' of them.[24] The heists that the trio of crooks pull in the context of the main play plot always work on multiple levels as well. The people who want the philosopher's stone (Mammon and Tribulation) have been tricked into paying for the services requested, providing funds to buy the necessary ''ingredients,'' and supplying all of the metal products (andirons, pots, pans, etc.) to turn to gold once the stone is ready. Subtle and Face then sell these items to other gullible ''clients'' for additional cash. Likewise, those who want their fortune read not only have to pay for the service, but are also blindfolded and placed in other compromising positions under preposterous pretenses so Dol, Subtle, or Face can steal the money and jewelry that they have with them.

The theatricality inherent in the shape shifting of the fairies is cleverly exploited in the elaborate, drawn out duping of Dapper, a gullible gambler who allows himself to be convinced that he is the nephew of the fairy queen, played with velvet-trussed gusto by Dol Common. Jonson turns popular beliefs about fairies' irresistible beauty and contemporary associations of the venerated Elizabeth I with her queenly counterpart in fairyland inside out, showing instead a common trull transforming herself into the fairy monarch. Of the scenes in which Dol impersonates the fairy queen, Frances Yates asks, ''What is Ben Jonson trying to do in these scenes? Surely, her royal Grace, the Fairy Queen, had an illustrious original. . . . By fouling the sacred image of the Fairy Queen he would seem to be attempting to break the Elizabeth Cult.''[25] Actually, Jonson cannot be credited with discrediting the cult, since the association of Elizabeth with a fairy queen popularly believed to abduct both hapless male lovers and helpless infants was already problematic, in and of itself.[26] Popular belief held that the fairy queen blithely took for herself the two crucial personal attachments that the virgin queen was forever missing: a lover and children. Although court poets such as Thomas Churchyard sanitized, to some degree, the image of the fairy queen with which Elizabeth was associated in progress entertainments and court poetry, there was no effective way to make readers or audience members think only of the ''positive'' valence of the fairy queen. Rather than trying to mitigate the subversive, negative potential of this association, Jonson revels in it. Robert Watson finds Jonson's use of his sources—both classical and contemporary—to be ''an opportunity to ambush, not only a variety of hackneyed traditions, but also the intellectual complacency that sustained those traditions. His victory is truly a *coup de théâtre*, a subversive seizure of

territory within the dramatic genre.''[27] A significant but largely overlooked aspect of the subversive strategy Jonson employs in *The Alchemist* hinges on the use to which he puts cultural assumptions about fairies.

Jonson not only was clearly well aware of the ways in which fairy belief had come to bolster the cult of Elizabeth over the course of the sixteenth century, but relied upon this association himself in the court masques that he wrote to celebrate Elizabeth's successor to the throne, King James, and his family.[28] Much as Spenser depicts Elizabeth's fairy analogue, Gloriana, as the crown jewel of the fairy kingdom in *The Faerie Queene*, Jonson has Silenus declare Oberon (Prince Henry) ''the height of all our race'' in his masque *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*.[29] Indeed, given the typical masque structure of movement from disorder (antimasque) to order (the formulaic dance of the masque proper), it is significant that Jonson chose to identify the Prince, who oversees the restoration of order and the obeisance paid to King James, as a fairy in *Oberon*. Clearly, as James A. Riddell and Stanley Stewart assert, ''Jonson had no ideological objection to favorable treatment of fairies in general, or of the Faery Queen in particular.''[30]

James I may have been pleased to be paid homage by aestheticized fairies in pompous court masques, but he publicly blasted popular belief in the fairy figures who sang for him at court. Dol's utterly successful impersonation of the fairy queen captures perfectly the sanctimonious fears of those like James, who in his *Daemonologie*[31] dismisses fairy belief as preposterous even as he nervously asserts that if fairies do exist, they should be considered no less of a spiritual threat than witches and other demons. Rosalind Miles discusses Jonson's tandem treatment of witchcraft practice and burgeoning capitalism in *The Devil Is an Ass* in a manner that is also applicable to his more complex satire of fairies, witchcraft, capitalism, alchemy, and religious controversy in *The Alchemist*:

> Here he put his finger on a key intellectual issue of his day, one that had vexed the minds of all, from the villager suspicious of an elderly female neighbour, to the highest in the land, the king himself. . . . But as the advancement of science and the spread of humanistic questioning combined to undermine older habits of thought, belief in the veracity of medieval demonology and witchcraft became harder to sustain. As he had with *The Alchemist*, Jonson picked up the precise moment at which this critical change was occurring, when educated and intelligent people stopped crediting something which had been unquestioningly accepted as true earlier in their lives.[32]

The Monarchy of FAIRIES once was great,
As good old Wives, and Nurſes do relate:
Then was the golden Age, from whence did ſpring
A Race of Fairies, dancing round a Ring,
Who in the Night-time did inform Mankind,
Of what the following Tales will bring to mind.

The fairy queen, holding court, from the frontispiece to Marie-Catherine d'Aulnoy, *The History of the Tales of the Fairies* (London: John Harris, 1716). (Reproduced with the kind permission of the Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, shelfmark 86068.)

Much the same argument could be made with respect to fairy belief, since the mass migration into urban centers—which was both produced by and generated the development of commercial capitalism—meant that the gap between urban and rural lifestyles also widened at this time. Fairy belief was firmly tied to the domestic, agricultural economy and thus logically fell into disfavor in an increasingly urban, mercantile culture. More the fool Dapper, then, for believing himself to be in the presence of the fairy queen in the heart of London's Blackfriars. However, as Keith Thomas points out, even among the fairy faithful there was little consistency in belief; he notes that the "huge variation in standard of living, educational level and intellectual sensibility which makes this society so diverse, and therefore so hard to generalise about" makes it difficult to generalize about phenomena such as fairy belief since, "at any one point in time there were so many different layers of belief and levels in sophistication."[33]

Jonson depicts Dol as a lewd, lying whore able to trick Dapper into a whole range of self-degradations by merely claiming to be the fairy queen. Her performance echoes in direct ways the fears of those such as James who opposed fairy belief as a carefully contrived performance by evil forces made to appear beneficent. Furthermore, this performance is staged by a woman whom the play openly identifies as a common criminal—a character whose every action violates social convention in an exaggerated manner calculated for comedic effect. Jonathan Haynes explains the popularity of the rogue in early modern theater: "The rogue found himself quite welcome in the theater. There the audience could indulge, in safety from his vermin and pilfering, the curiosity and fascinated ambiguity always accompanying the figure of the rogue, and could indulge also the temptation to think through, via the status crime of vagabondage, the themes of social identity and political organization which had become unavoidable in England's post-feudal society, and which now preoccupied the drama."[34] Not human and therefore not subject to human punishments or censure for their more questionable activities, fairies, too, offered early modern Britons the vicarious experience of social, spiritual, and physical freedom Haynes here assigns to the rogue. Insofar as Dol invokes elite manifestations of fairy lore, such as Spenser's epic homage in *The Faerie Queene*, the trull's poseur performance as the faux fairy queen offers satirical release from the sociopolitical order that figure represents. Insofar as she invokes popular fairy lore about the mischief and malice characteristic of fairies, Dol reveals the extent to which the role of the fairy queen is

just another facet of her own roguish identity, since the fairies in early modern England could not consistently be counted on to do anyone good. The comedic impact of Dol's impersonation of the fairy queen would have been great for Jonson's audience, who had real-life analogues such as Judith Philips for the "fairy quean."

Haynes finds the popularity of cony-catching literature such as *The Severall Notorious and Lewd Cousnages of Iohn West, and Alice West* to be linked to "deep social change which could not be understood." This linkage produced a tension in the popular reception of such literature and the vagabonds it depicted, whom Haynes identifies as "an alien and exotic population." Haynes locates this tension between "two ideological functions of the underworld, as Other and as model for the rest of society. Both, certainly, are responses to the dislocations of early capitalism, which was creating an army of the unemployed and encouraging economic activities that were illegitimate in the traditional order."[35] This same tension emerged in the popular response to fairyland—fairies were both Other than human and idealized humans in their mimicry of mortal domestic and agricultural labor at superhuman speeds and with superhuman dexterity. Haynes goes on to contend that, once on the stage, "The vagabonds are valued imaginatively because they are outside the social order; this structural otherness is the only important fact about them . . . the urban underworld is an invisible empire."[36] Thus, Dol is doubly the Other in *The Alchemist* as both rogue and fairy, queen of a pair of invisible empires, Mammon's quasi Playboy mansion and Dapper's mythical inheritance, fairyland.

The inappropriateness of Dol's conduct as the fairy queen clearly offers little insight into the "nature" of the fairy monarch. Indeed, it seems that the wider the gap between the "real" fairy queen and Dol's performance of her, the more preposterous (and hilarious) her heist becomes, as does Dapper's willingness to accept the feint as legitimate. Edward Partridge contends that, ultimately, the inflated roles taken by the impostors and the bombastic rhetoric they invoke in playing them "show how thoroughly mean the situation is by bringing into the context the very standards by which it could be measured. . . . When Dol calls herself Queen of Faeries, we see how far she really is from the Faery Queen."[37] The Wests may have found gullible souls willing to invest in fairy stock, but contemporary accounts of such fraudulent schemes were every bit as derisive of the dupes in question as Jonson is of Dapper and the rogues' explicitly Puritan victims in *The Alchemist*.

Changeable Fairies and Fairy Changelings

Catherine Gimelli Martin notes that one of the major achievements of *The Alchemist* lies in "simultaneously accepting but also altering the basis upon which 'natural' can be distinguished from 'unnatural' begetting."[38] Such a distinction is particularly important for the changeling plot, in which Face and Subtle offer Dapper the unnatural story of fairy descent along with the perfectly natural one of a possible future inheritance from a doting wealthy single aunt (I.ii.155–56). Face begins the "fairy tale," telling Dapper:

> *Face.* Well, a rare star
> Reigned at your birth.
> *Dapper.* At mine, sir! No.
> *Face.* The doctor
> Swears that you are—
> *Subtle.* Nay, captain, you'll tell all now.
> *Face.* Allied to the Queen of Fairy.
> *Dapper.* Who? that I am?
> Believe it, no such matter—
> *Face.* Yes, and that
> You were born with a caul on your head.
>
> (I.ii.123–29)

Early modern changeling belief was, in and of itself, an explanation for "natural" phenomena ranging from the tragic—crib deaths, infant abnormalities—to mundane characteristics such as the caul that Face foists on the self-deprecating Dapper.[39] Keith Thomas notes early modern belief that "the infant's expectation of life could be divined from a scrutiny of the after-birth, or that good fortune would accompany the child born with the caul (or 'sillyhow') over its head. Even in the mid-seventeenth century a country gentleman might regard his caul as a treasure to be preserved with great care, and bequeathed to his descendants."[40] This is why Face is so insistent that Dapper was born with a caul and also why the modest law clerk keeps swearing that he was not. Spoofing London's protocapitalist, free market economy, Jonson consistently depicts the rogues baiting their dupes into far greater benefits than they had originally sought, thus increasing their ability to suck the greedy fools dry.

Although only the most cultured members of Jonson's audience would have thought of *The Faerie Queene* as they watched fairy belief subjected to every satirical indignity in *The Alchemist*,[41] fairy lore regarding changelings was well entrenched in the popular consciousness. Indeed, the treatment of changelings in *The Faerie Queene*

constitutes one of the few instances in the epic of direct invocation of popular fairy traditions. Jonson is meticulous about the sectarian beliefs he spoofs in his hyperreligious characters;[42] there is no reason to doubt that he was equally deliberate in plays such as this one in his use of fairy lore. Most audience members would have known, for instance, that what was left *by* the fairies was seldom preferable to the original offspring. Unlike his chivalrous changeling counterparts in Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Arthur and Redcrosse, Dapper is not stolen by fairies from his stout Saxon parents in the account provided by Subtle, but is left by fairies in lieu of a legitimate British baby. When one compares this to what Obedience tells Redcrosse in *The Faerie Queene* about the "base Elfin brood there for thee left"[43] the myth of origin Face and Subtle offer Dapper takes on more the character of an insult than a point of pride.

While fairies reputedly took excellent care of the children they whisked away from their human parents, the fairy infants that they left in their stead were difficult to love. In Wales, for example, the changeling was believed initially to resemble the stolen infant in every particular, but then to degenerate rapidly: "It grows ugly of face, shrivelled of form, ill-tempered, wailing, and generally frightful. It bites and strikes and becomes a terror to the poor mother. Sometimes it is idiotic; but again it has a supernatural cunning, not only impossible in a mortal babe, but not even appertaining to the oldest heads, on other than fairy shoulders."[44] Seemingly unconscious of the implicit affront in his fairy biography, Dapper—eager for any external legitimation of his own self-worth—showers angels and half-crowns on Face and Subtle, paying far more for a fairy aunt he never dreamed of than he ever agreed to pay for the familiar spirit he originally sought of the Alchemist. Perhaps Dapper is so liberal in his thanksgiving because a familiar spirit provided by the fairy queen savors far less of damnation to the Jacobeans than one offered by a witch or—worse still—the devil himself.

Face and Subtle build Dapper up for his repeatedly postponed audience before his fairy aunt with assertions such as Face's claim "Your aunt's afire, / But that she will not show it, t'have a sight of you" (III.iv.139–40). The stage direction that opens III.v is choice given the moral ambiguity of the fairies and the heavy religious satire of the play; Subtle is directed to enter "*disguised like a priest of Fairy*" (III.v.s.d.).[45] The term *priest* referred to those who presided over the Catholic Mass or classical pagan rituals—synonymous modes of worship to the Puritans, and both anathema to them. Subtle drapes "this robe, the petticoat of Fortune," over Dapper, offer-

ing the awestruck young man both his aunt's benediction and the history of his infancy with the Queen of Fairy:

> And though to fortune near be her petticoat,
> Yet nearer is her smock, the Queen doth note:
> And therefore, ev'n of that a piece she hath sent,
> Which, being a child, to wrap him in was rent;
> And prays him for a scarf he now will wear it,
> With as much love as then her Grace did tear it.
>
> (III.v.9–15)

After dressing Dapper in a petticoat—a garment worn by women and children—Subtle and Face blindfold Dapper with a "scarf" reputedly torn from his aunt's undergarments ("smock") that once served as the infant Dapper's swaddling clothes.[46] Dapper is told that he must "throw away all worldly pelf" to demonstrate his utter faith in his fairy aunt's ability "to make his state" (III.v.18, 17). The blindfold covering Dapper's eyes enables Subtle and Face to double their roles. They alternate between speaking to him in their own voices and crying "*Ti, ti, ti*" in fairy falsetto as they pinch him, impersonating the fairies that have come at the behest of his aunt to make sure that he truly does cast off all of his worldly possessions.[47]

To hear Face and Subtle tell it, the Fairy Queen loves her cast-off nephew very much—a manipulative piece of illogic to which Dapper remains blissfully oblivious. Titania will not part with her changeling boy in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on any account; since fairies typically left undesirables of their realm as changelings for humans, it is hard to conceive of why Dapper's loving aunt would have cast him off as a fairy infant. But then, Dapper does seem to lack common sense. Gail Kern Paster raises the issue of the boy actor, early modern impersonator of women and fairies as well as urban dandies like Dapper, in her discussion of Dapper's reaction to and interaction with his fairy aunt in *The Alchemist.* As Paster points out, Dol identifies him with near-lip-smacking relish as "'a fine young quodling' (I.i.189), an unripe apple," and thus "establishes him as sexually immature and tentative."[48] He is ripe for the picking by a professional seductress such as Dol.

A Quean in Her Castle

Michael Shapiro notes the deliberate use of bawdry in plays performed by or employing prepubescent actors, which, in his view,

heightened "the audience's awareness that the actors were children, as bawdry of any sort would probably have done by underlining the incongruity between the erotic behavior of the characters and the sexual immaturity of the actors."[49] Dapper's interactions with Quean Dol underscore his status as a liminal character by virtue of his level of maturity—not quite a man nor yet still a boy. His developmental liminality is given an added dimension when he enters the liminal zone of Lovewit's house, no longer Lovewit's home: "Like Bottom, Dapper has crossed over the threshold of a liminal space, controlled by beings whose powers he does not comprehend but who seem intent on imposing a kind of bodily privilege on him."[50] In a brilliant analysis of the staging requirements of the play, Susan Viguers notes the liminality emphasized by the stage setting, which demands frequent use of a window in close proximity to a door.[51] Throughout the play, action in the main space (Lovewit's house) is driven by what is happening just beyond it. Furthermore, the play's action is focused on the liminal status of all of its characters, all struggling to pass from one socioeconomic tier to another. Fairies are associated directly with these liminal states and with overseeing of the rites of passage from poverty to wealth, from solitude to marriage, and from childhood to adulthood in which the various characters in the play are engaged.

As Dol's supposed fairy emissaries, Face and Subtle, are busy pinching the blindfolded Dapper and plucking his worldly wealth from purse and pocket, Dol enters the room to inform her partners in crime that Sir Epicure Mammon has arrived, eagerly expecting an assignation with her. Dapper, too, professes to "long to see her Grace," but the rogues already have his money. Mammon is without a doubt the prioritized prey. Subtle stalls Dapper, announcing that her fairy highness "now is set / At dinner in her bed" but "has sent you / From her own private trencher, a dead mouse, / And a piece of gingerbread . . . lest you faint with fasting" (IV.i.63–67). This piece of gingerbread is ultimately used as a gag to prevent the already blindfolded Dapper from speaking and possibly revealing the rogues to their other clients. In the interest of protecting the secrecy of their multiple deceptions, Subtle asks, "Where shall we now bestow him?" and Dol immediately suggests, "In the privy" (IV.i.77–78).[52] Paster claims that the trio of rogues' gradual revelation of Dapper's fairy birth narrative, which concludes with the indignity of imprisonment in the privy, is "a parodic reenactment of the Augustinian notion of birth between urine and feces. . . . Instead of acting in the role of midwife to extract Dapper from the excremental site of birth, the trio acts collectively to return him there."[53] Since popu-

lar lore abounded in tales of fairy midwives—usually a mortal woman who assisted at a fairy birth—this constitutes another inversion by Jonson of typical fairy conduct. Rather than a fairy who requests the assistance of a mortal to deliver a fairy infant, Jonson presents the spectacle of a mortal disguised as a fairy who orders a young man supposed to be a fairy back into a misogynistic metaphorization of the womb.

Earlier, Face and Subtle gave poor Dapper instructions to dab vinegar at his nose, mouth, and ears; bathe his fingers and eyes; and "put on a clean shirt," since "You do not know what grace her Grace may do you in clean linen" (I.ii.174–75). Dapper might as well try to drain a river with a sieve as keep his linen clean in the privy. Paster argues that the details of the rituals to which the trio of rogues subject Dapper effectively effeminate him within the context of fairy lore specifically. According to Paster, "That the fairies' punishments fleetingly evoked by the mention of 'clean linen' are most often visited upon the bodies of country *girls* heightens the suggestion of Dapper's retreat from adult male heterosexuality to the more ambiguous gender identifications of adolescence."[54] Fairy punishments were visited upon men, women, and children indiscriminately in early modern lore. However, as Paster specifies, fairy punishments for laundry that is ill done would apply to girls since they were responsible for the laundry in early modern households that employed servants. Mario DiGangi notes that "In early modern usage, *effeminacy* refers primarily to *gender*, not sexual deviance: it signifies the absence of 'masculine' reason and self-control."[55] As Shakespeare did with Falstaff in *Merry Wives*, Jonson renders Dapper effeminate by depicting him as eager for the luxuries afforded by ill-gotten financial gains but prevented from attaining these goals because of personal attributes associated with women in early modern thought, including witchcraft, and easily exploited naiveté.

Paster contends that Jonson is parodying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Titania's liaison with Bottom in the Dapper/Dol Common scenes.[56] Although she makes some interesting points, given the psychoanalytic bent of her analysis and her focus on the socially unacceptable—that which is assigned "embarrassing" status—it seems odd that she does not explore the incestuous overtones implied by such a view of Dapper's interactions with his "fairy aunt," particularly if she sees it as a reprisal of the overtly erotic relationship between Titania and Bottom. Ruth Evans Netscher also reads Dapper's encounter with the fairy queen as similar to Bottom's sexualized interaction with Titania, suggesting that Subtle concocts the plan of having him meet the fairy queen "because he knows that a

child's fantasy is as close as Dapper's inhibitions will allow him to a woman'' (183). Those who suggest that Jonson is parodying *A Midsummer Night's Dream* presume that it is the Titania/Bottom relationship that is being sent up. Suppose, though, that it is the Titania/Indian boy relationship that Jonson is parodying instead. Just as Oberon and Titania are locked in fierce combat over control of the Indian boy, all three of the impostors are fighting over the ''rights'' to their pawns (and their money). Jonson seems to be aping Titania's fierce devotion to the Indian boy in *Dream* rather than her drug-induced lust for the boorish Bottom in his preposterous account of the fairy queen's intense desire for her long-lost nephew and everything of value he possesses. Dapper's obliviousness to the incestuous import of the worship he is expected to offer his aunt in such a parodic rendering simply heightens its humor.

The tasks to which Dol sets Dapper when impersonating his royal fairy aunt suggest the occult. The blood-sucking bird that she bestows upon him conjures up a witch's familiar and not the diminutive minions who flit about Bottom, granting him favors. Edward Partridge explains the demonic associations popularly attached to the ''fly'' that the unholy trio have promised Dapper:

> A ''fly'' was a familiar demon supposed to be in association with or under the power of a man. The OED traces the word to the notion that devils assumed the form of flies. Other terms used in *The Alchemist* are ''birde'' and ''familiar'' (a spirit or demon supposed to attend at call). The ''flies,'' then, constituted a kind of angelic order which was supposed to guard and wait on the men to whom they were attached. . . . Face makes a distinction between the orders in the hierarchy when he says that Dapper wants a ''rifling *flye*,'' not a ''great *familiar*'' (I.ii.83–84). But Dapper corrects him; he wants one for all games. A ''rifling *flye*'' would be a guardian angel only in gambling, whereas a ''great *familiar*'' would attend him at all times.[57]

When Partridge refers to flies as ''a *kind* of angelic order,'' he is referring to them as an inversion of the celestial orders that keep company with God in heaven. In a play rife with satire of Christian sects and the criminal underbelly of the city, it is fitting that the guardian angel purchased by Dapper seems to be a fallen one.

It is also fitting that the ruler of a realm as ambiguous as fairyland, the fairy queen, is the one both to bestow this fly on Dapper and to instruct him how to feed and care for it properly. Both Dapper and the theater audience are endlessly promised the spectacle of Dol as the fairy queen, but it is a promise that is deferred until V.iv. By this point, Dapper has been wound up to the point of frenzy for a meet-

ing with his fairy kin. In his agitation, he eats his gingerbread gag, ''overcome'' with the stench in the privy (V.iv.5). Finally faced with his aunt, who ''has a stately presence,'' according to Subtle, Dapper drops to his knees and ''shuffles towards her'' while Subtle eggs him on, instructing him, ''bid, God save you!'' (V.iv.23–24). Fairies were believed by some to be souls trapped between heaven and hell, waiting for a final judgment at the Last Day. Dapper may well pray, therefore, for her salvation. Jonson viciously lampoons the value of religious benedictions by having the queen of the fairies, a species of spirit neither godly nor demonic, return Dapper's complimentary blessing by giving him what seems to be a witch's familiar.

Dol tells her nephew: ''Wear it, and feed it about this day se'ennight, / On your right wrist—'' (V.iv.36–37). Subtle then interrupts to instruct Dapper how, specifically, his wrist can provide nourishment: ''Open a vein with a pin, / And let it suck but once a week'' (V.iv.37–38). Partridge notes that ''the connection with witchcraft, latent in any mention of 'fly' is most evident here. As in witchcraft, Dapper's guardian angel is to be a parasite and feed on his life-blood.''[58] There are, perhaps, few such stunning examples of the utterly ambiguous, incredibly complicated relationship in which fairies stood to early modern religious practice and witch belief than this scene, in which the *fairy* queen offers her devotee a guardian *angel* with *demonic* dietary needs. Jonson seems to be drawing on a wide variety of cultural materials in this characterization, including not only urban prankster pamphlets like that detailing the scam artistry of Alice West, but also witchcraft depositions in which tales of fairies blurred and shaded into narratives of demonic rituals.

As if the satanic blessing of the fly were not enough, Jonson pushes the link between the fairy queen as Dol plays her and witchcraft even further by having Subtle tell Dapper to pay homage to his ''kind aunt'' by bestowing a kiss on ''her departing part'' (V.iv.57). A contemporary audience would have been well aware that one does not make obeisance to any queen—fairy or otherwise—by kissing her ass. This gesture would have been familiar, however, from popular descriptions of the illicit acts at witch's sabbats, including the ass-kissing, orgiastic worship of the Prince of Darkness. Thomas Cooper, for example, in *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617), describes the ''covening of Witches into the Church'' in a manner that contextualizes Dapper's encounter with his fairy aunt. Cooper reports that Satan ''First, require of his *Proselite* an *acknowledgement of her covenant*. . . . And Secondly, when this *acknowledgement* is made, in testimoniall of this subjection, Satan offers *his back-parts* to bee kissed of his vassal.''[59] Though Cooper acknowledges that men were capable of

being lured into witchcraft by Satan's wiles, he uses the presumptive *she* throughout the text to refer to witches.[60] As Falstaff in *Merry Wives* is rendered effeminate when cross-dressed as the old woman of Brainford, considered a witch by Ford, Dapper is rendered effeminate in *The Alchemist* when compelled to worship the age-old embodiment of sensual vice, a prostitute, in the manner popularly ascribed to women accused of worshiping Satan to obtain the powers of witchcraft.

Jonson's typically harsh satire suggests that the exploitative mercantilism of urban culture has shifted the nation's attention from the rural seat of the fairy monarch to the urban seat of the fairy quean, from knights pricking on the plain to benighted city gulls, pricked by greedy tricksters until they (literally, in Dapper's case) bleed. Dapper was seeking a familiar of the rogues in order to improve his gambling game; once he discovers his fairy heritage, however, Dapper becomes intent on exploiting his fairy connections to advance his social state. Given the realities of Dol's line of work and the rather packed schedule that she maintains over the course of the play, it must require near-Herculean effort for Dapper to keep his faith. But the same enticement is offered the audience—the audience, too, is repeatedly teased with a promised vision of Dol as fairy queen, her only role that is so laboriously set up and so languorously drawn out over the course of the play.

Partridge baldly asserts: "Dol Common is a whore, is known as a whore, and knows herself to be a whore. At various times and by various people in the play she is said to be a brach, Royal Dol, Claridiana, a republic, Queen of Faery, smock-rampant, and Madame Suppository. Some of these names come closer to the truth—whatever the truth about Dol is—than others, but in most of them there is an ironic disparity between what she really is and what she is said to be."[61] This poses an interesting question that Partridge does not pursue: What *is* the truth about Dol? Much thought needs to be given to what she is doing when she is not present on the stage for Face and Subtle's squabbles: she is busy making money for the triumvirate. Granted, given Face's double double-cross in the last act, she has ultimately made money only for him. However, in a play that glories in the ruthlessness of its rogues, it is significant that Jonson takes pains to depict Dol as every bit as duplicitous and self-interested as her male counterparts.

For instance, Subtle and Dol at one point concoct a scheme to cheat Face—Subtle suggests that they take the collective booty, pretend to travel to Ratcliff, and then secretly "turn our course / To Brainford" (V.iv.76–77) to shake anyone who might try to track

them.[62] Dol is as enthusiastic about this plan as she was about preserving the "venture tripartite" at the beginning of the play and for the same reason—she finds Face's plan to marry the widow, Dame Pliant, a direct violation of their "articles" (I.i.135, V.iv.72). The trio may share and share alike in financial, criminal, and sexual ménages á trois, but a wife is clearly an indivisible commodity.[63] Her eye ever on the bottom line, Dol, one can argue, is the titular alchemist of the play—she uses her body to work on the "material" that Subtle and Face provide to her (her clients) and reaps from them pure gold.[64]

Although most critics and commentators on *The Alchemist* give Dol Common short shrift, focusing instead on the power struggle between Face and Subtle, she is actually a key player in both the gulls' "venture tripartite" and Jonson's multilevel satire.[65] Herford and Simpson deviate from the critical norm and discuss Dol's importance to the triumvirate of rogues:

> If Face is a Mosca of more shifts and better luck, the third member of the "indenture tripartite" has no equivalent in the earlier play. . . . Dol is an indispensable member of the "house"—indispensable to the precious pair whose game she plays and whose dangerous feuds she quells, indispensable to the intrigue which she complicates and enriches, indispensable above all to the satire, to the flavour of which her presence adds an ironical pungency not to be otherwise obtained. . . . As a character Dol falls short of being a masterpiece, but she stands in the front rank of Jonson's women, and may be counted one of the best "Dol Commons" in our literature.[66]

Though it is a dubious distinction at best to be held up as one of the best "Dol Commons" in literature (and, indeed, in the front rank of the women created by a playwright almost universally reviled as a misogynist), one must bear in mind that Dol shares the spotlight with two equally odious specimens of London lowlife. The vigor with which she plies her trade should no more be held against her than Face's remarkable deceptive ingenuity is held against him. The typical critical response is to revel in the criminal genius of Face and Subtle and condemn Dol for her sordid scams.

Such a response is unfair since, ultimately, all three of the rogues are fundamentally like their victims—all are trying to exploit the upward mobility made possible in urban mercantile culture by taking various shortcuts to the top of the socioeconomic ladder. Jonson uses the theater as a venue in which to vent his frustration with the social climbing all around him, turning his drama into a public objection to the relatively new phenomenon of economic advance-

ment that outstripped one's by-birth social position.[67] Jonson seems to want to drive his satire home—to make his objections clear and send his audience away with a more sober perspective on London's increasing social mobility, which could, at times, seem dangerously volatile. He is, ultimately, advocating social change, albeit a reactionary species of alteration. Just as Catholic saints, woodland fairies, and demonic familiar spirits were all one to the fundamentalist religious zealots that Jonson loathed, the playwright seems to be suggesting that setting up a shop, or a "great game" at dice or cards, or an alchemist's study is ultimately a variation on the sinful theme of worshiping lucre, almighty lucre.

Cultural Alchemy

Though she makes a completely hilarious Queen of Faery, Dol has her most stunning performance in the play in her stint as a member of the gentry who has gone mad studying the theological work of Hugh Broughton.[68] The least reference to biblical matters will send her into raving gibberish. Mammon lustfully pursues Dol as the mad lady and promises to court her as Jove did Danae—in a shower of gold—once he commands the philosopher's stone. Much as her fairy minions babbled at Dapper, the former fairy queen, Dol, speaks a language that is difficult to apprehend once Mammon triggers a "fit."[69] Gerard Cox writes: "In a passage that demands to be heard rather than read, so farcical is the effect of its verbal polyphony, Dol quotes extensively from Broughton's interpretation in *The Concept of Scripture* of the four great beasts in Daniel. . . . While Dol is babbling and Mammon is conferring with Face in a near frenzy, Subtle enters to pronounce a parody of divine judgment."[70] Most critics concur that the brunt of the satire in this play is directed at hypocritical religious zeal. In her dual roles as the fairy queen and the mad lady, Dol is an integral part of this central aspect of Jonson's project.

Jonson's Catholic sympathies over the course of the decade or so preceding his work on *The Alchemist* provide a personal context for the play's persistent Puritan bashing.[71] His portrayal of the fairy queen as a cozening whore quite well versed in her radical sectarian theology can be viewed as a strike back at radical religious reformers who linked Catholicism and fairy belief in an effort to dismiss both traditions as little better than paganism. Both Catholics and Protestants characterized the churches of their theological adversaries as "whores," a term that became synonymous with "false church" in religious treatises during the lengthy reform period.[72] Jonson gives

his audience a whore who dresses up as the fairy queen and then spouts radical Protestant sectarian doctrine. If a whore is a false church, Jonson leaves little room for doubt about his attitude toward at least the religious sects whose beliefs he lampoons in Dol's zealous histrionics.[73]

Rosalind Miles is but one among many critics who point out Jonson's satirical ingenuity in equating Puritanism and alchemy: "In a straightforward dramatic equation, Jonson uses the characters of Tribulation Wholesome and Ananias to assert that Puritans were in the same business of spiritual and material fraud as alchemists were, so that for canting, lying and cheating there was nothing to choose between them. Puritanism in Jonson's view was as likely to lead its followers to salvation, as alchemy to turn its believers' lead into gold."[74] Since the play abounds in disparaging references to similarly hopeless hopes in the powers of fairies, Dol's dual performances as the fairy queen and the mad mystic form a thematic link between fairy lore and Jonson's religious satire. Dol's ability to shift gears from regal fairy to raving lady suggests not only the duplicity of her "natural" criminal persona, but also the shape shifting of fairies and, in Jonson's derogatory view, of religious zealots.

Jonson's use of fairies in his religious satire, in fact, anticipates the fairies' increasingly prominent role in the religious controversies that continued to widen the gap between Protestants and Catholics in Britain over the course of the seventeenth century. He may well be using the moral ambiguity of fairies in early modern popular belief as a means of launching a counterattack on Puritans for using fairy belief to assault Catholicism. In his *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, Sir Walter Scott identifies "the Church of Rome" as being "most indulgent to the fairy folk," citing the poetry of Dr. Corbet, "nothing less than the Bishop of Oxford and Norwich in the beginning of the seventeenth century,"[75] as evidence for this view. In a work entitled "A proper new Ballad, entitled the Fairies' Farewell," Corbett asserts that the fairies

> Were of the old profession,
> Their songs were Ave Maries,
> Their dances were procession.
> But now, alas! they all are dead,
> Or gone beyond the seas;
> Or farther for religion fled,
> Or else they take their ease.[76]

Obviously, Corbet's attribution of "Ave Maries" to the fairies ties them to Catholicism, but the suggestion that their dances were actu-

ally processions also invokes Protestant resistance to the pageantry of the Catholic Mass, which came to be seen as idolatrous during the Reformation. The direct assertion that fairies have fled across the seas or even farther ''for religion'' renders them virtual recusant Catholics, forced either to flee Protestant England or to conceal their existence.

In their act V meeting, Dol enjoins Dapper to be worthy of his lofty fairy heritage by staying out of Heaven and Hell. There is a footnote in the Norton Critical Edition of the play explaining that these were the names of two London taverns.[77] There was a third tavern called Purgatory according to this note, and it is intriguing that Dol does not tell Dapper to stay out of that one, since fairyland was linked in some lore to the space between heaven and hell,[78] the space that Catholics labeled purgatory. Neither Protestantism nor Puritanism has room for Purgatory, the place with which Dol implicitly aligns fairyland when she tells Dapper to be true to his fairy heritage by staying out of Heaven and Hell.

The reasons for Protestant objection to Catholic belief in purgatory are of some relevance to Jonson's relentless satire of the religious controversies of his era in *The Alchemist*. Eamon Duffy offers interesting insight into all of the various points at which Protestants objected to Catholic support for purgatory, including the linkage of this belief to the payment of indulgences and the consequent financial link between indulgences and the overblown adornment of Catholic churches, where much of this money ended up. Duffy writes: ''The whole structure of mortuary provision of Masses, alms, pilgrimage, and the adornment of churches and images, which to a greater or lesser degree characterized almost all the wills of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century English men and women, was raised on the belief that such largesse would hasten the soul's passage through the pains of Purgatory.''[79] So, not only was the notion of a spiritual halfway house perceived to be pagan and idolatrous, so was the rationale behind it: ''Pay your way through the pearly gates.'' Jonson turns the tables on the religious reformers who made such claims, showing a motley crew of London sectarian Protestants of various degrees of ostensible devotion willing to pay and pay and pay for the material comforts of the mortal realm with little apparent concern for the hereafter, be it spent in heaven, hell, or purgatory. His ''devout'' Protestants appear worse than the reformers' caricatures of Catholics paying their way through purgatory, since the sectarians' financial rapaciousness does not extend beyond the here and now.

Jonson uses the fairy plot to carry his religious satire through to

the very end of the play. When Lovewit unexpectedly returns to his house, Face succeeds in stalling him at the door until Dapper cries out within (presumably having just choked down the last bits of his gingerbread gag and been hit full force with *eau de privy*).[80] Dapper's meeting with his fairy aunt takes place inside the house, in fact, as Lovewit and the suspicious neighbors are massing in the street, demanding to know once and for all what is going on behind the closed doors. Ian Donaldson points out that Dapper's reentry in act V is preceded by one of the neighbors' swearing to Lovewit that he heard a cry emanating from the house one night as of a person being strangled (V.i.33, 36–37).[81] Two scenes later, the stage direction "*Dapper cryes out within*" (V.iii.63 s.d.) occurs. Not only does this echo what the neighbor professes to have heard, but the audience knows that Dapper practically was strangled, both by his gingerbread gag and by the stench of the privy where the rogues stowed him. The play's dénouement hinges, therefore, on the fairy plot.

Conclusion

Reveling in *The Alchemist*'s subversive energy, Jonathan Haynes concludes: "The underworld is not the antithesis of society, but its continuation, its shadow; the concept of the underworld is based not on a containing form which gives criminality a shape and an identity, but on an energy which was playing through and—within limits—breaking open all social forms, creating fissures and escaping jets of steam, and the myriad little explosions which give *The Alchemist* its effervescence."[82] *The Alchemist* is so effervescent at least in part because it is imbued with fairy lore. Just as early modern society could take delight in tales of mischievous fairies who somehow remained endearing even when their conduct was most objectionable, so Jonson makes his rogues more palatable and his religious satire easier to swallow by seasoning his play well with fairy parodies, allusions, and theatrics. Just as Shakespeare has Puck emerge from the stage and its fairy wood at the end of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* to address the audience directly, Watson notes that Jonson concludes *The Alchemist* "with a brief epilogue in which both Lovewit and Face, without moving completely out of character, apologize for any breaches of the conventional rules of drama. It is appropriately unclear, at the end of a play about the confusion of drama and life, whether they are apologizing as actors or as characters."[83] It is appropriate, too, that a play that so deliberately confuses drama and life, actors and characters, gold and dross, true religion and false,

queen and quean, relies so heavily on its fairy characters and their attributes. The confused attitudes toward fairies in this period made them ideal avatars for the confusion associated with sharp changes in socioeconomics, religion, and politics—the precise kinds of confusion that Ben Jonson delighted in exploring and exploiting in his plays.

4

''Change You, Madam'': Social Role Transgressions and Gender Transformations in *Cymbeline*

ONCE THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL PRINCESS WHO LIVED WITH HER FATHER IN his kingdom. Her mother was dead, and her two older brothers had been mysteriously kidnapped from their cradles in their infancy, at a time that the princess did not remember, a time before she was born. She was not lonely, though. Her father took into his care the son of a loyal soldier killed in the line of duty, whose mother died giving birth to him. The two grew up together and, when they came of age, fell in love and wanted to marry. However, in the meantime, the king had married another woman—a greedy, grasping woman with a son of her own and ambitions for a crown not only for her head, but also for her son's. She wanted the beautiful princess to marry her son.

So, the princess did the only thing that a woman wildly in love could do: she secretly married her childhood sweetheart, giving him the beautiful diamond ring from her own mother's marriage to mark their union. Having nothing in the world but what the king out of his goodness chose to give him, her husband gave her a bracelet from his own arm to wear, to bind her to him. Enraged at her willfulness, the king banished her husband from the realm, on pain of death. The two promised to contrive some means of being together again and sorrowfully parted.

Upon his arrival in Italy, the princess's husband met an evil-spirited man who wagered that he could suborn the chastity of the young man's beautiful new wife. Confident in her integrity but not sufficiently self-assured to withstand the man's taunting, her husband agreed to the wager, betting the very ring that she gave him as a token of their union against her fidelity to him. He was right to trust her: she rebuffed the man, but, undeterred, he contrived to sneak into her room at night while she slept and collected enough

information about her room and her body to convince her husband that he had violated her chastity. Hurt and angry, her husband ordered his loyal servant to kill her. Pitying her, believing as her husband did not that she was innocent, the loyal servant instead helped her to escape the court. She lived in a remote cave, dressed as a boy, in the company of two young men and their guardian for some time. Falling ill, she took a potion made by the queen that the loyal servant had given her, believing it to be a powerful medicine. In reality, it was a potent sleeping drug that made the recipient seem dead. Buried alive, she woke beside a decapitated corpse wearing her husband's clothes. After a series of adventures, she ended up back at her father's court, still disguised as a boy, where she found that the two young men from the cave were really her brothers who had disappeared so long ago, that the corpse had actually been that of her evil stepbrother, and she was reunited with her penitent husband.

This, in broad strokes, is the narrative of Shakespeare's late romance, *Cymbeline*. Although there are no explicit fairy characters in this story, fairies are in fact referenced at key moments in the experience of some of the play's most provocative characters, including the princess, Imogen; her long-lost brothers, Guiderius and Arviragus; and her husband, Posthumus. As Thomas Rist notes, "magic is part of the fabric of *Cymbeline*'s plot";[1] much of this magic would have been recognizable to early modern theatergoers as fairy magic. The ambiguity of the inhabitants of fairyland surfaces in the plot and characterization of *Cymbeline*, offering an implicit challenge to the control exercised over gender, class, and moral conduct in early modern state-mandated religion. All of the central characters behave in ways that defy socially defined gender roles, and many of them have occasion to offer firm descriptions of stereotypical gender role performance that are undermined by the outcome of the play's action. Set in pre-Christian Britain, Rome, and Wales, *Cymbeline* recounts the resolution of three basic crises:

1. The defiant marriage of Imogen, heir to the throne, to Posthumus, an orphan raised by King Cymbeline in the court
2. Posthumus's banishment to Italy for this offense and his subsequent deception by an Italian noble, Iachimo, in a wager regarding Imogen's chastity that leads Posthumus rashly to pursue her execution
3. The flat refusal of Britain to pay a tributary tax to Rome, which results in the Roman invasion of Britain

Posthumus is ultimately revealed to be of sufficiently noble birth to merit Imogen as a spouse. Posthumus's wise servant, Pisanio, ignores

the execution order; Iachimo confesses his treachery; and the Brits rout the Roman troops but ultimately agree to pay the tribute to Caesar anyway, thus restoring peace and harmony and, mythically, allowing the *pax universalis* necessary to usher in the birth of Christ, popularly placed during Cymbeline's reign. Finally, Imogen's brothers, Guiderius and Arviragus, who were kidnapped from their cradles, are found in Wales and restored to their rightful positions at court. The play begins with a princess defiantly married against her father's wishes, her heir-to-the-throne brothers missing since birth, the original queen dead and replaced by an evil witch-woman and her asinine son, and clear dissension among the monarch's rank and file about the king's response to these events (I.i.). We do not see a patriarchal order degenerate in *Cymbeline* as in a tragedy such as *King Lear*, therefore, but, rather, come in on its degeneracy in medias res.[2] *Cymbeline* ends not with the restoration of order, but with the establishment of a new order, deliberately inflected with measured quantities of qualities coded masculine and feminine. *Cymbeline* explores not only the masculine side of its heroine, but also the feminine sides of several of the male characters, offering a clear example of Phyllis Rackin's contention that "the theater provided an arena where changing gender definitions could be displayed, deplored, or enforced and where anxieties about them could be expressed by playwrights and incited or repressed among their audiences".[3] Though fairies are less explicitly present as characters, "real" or fabricated, in *Cymbeline* than in the other three plays I have thus far discussed, the play makes distinct associative connections to them via its plot and the by-now familiar triad of gender, class, and religious controversies with which it grapples.

Critics and scholars curious about the origins of plot and characterization in Shakespeare's plays have offered thorough analyses of the way he invokes the Bible, chronicle history, and works of classical antiquity, such as Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. *Cymbeline* makes use of all of these sources, and much has been written about the play's bases in Christian tradition, nationalist British history, and pagan mythology.[4] However, traditional British lore about fairies stands in the background of this play's complex plot as well. Many of the aspects of the play that scholars, critics, directors, and actors have found frustratingly enigmatic are illuminated by a careful examination of the play's reliance on fairy lore. Some of the uncertainty that critics feel about the genre of plays such as *Cymbeline* stems from an uncertainty about the fairy lore that is incorporated in the plays. While scholars have been quite thorough in their contextual analyses of other types of cultural sources (such as the mythology or chronicle

histories discussed), most have failed to consider the ways in which early modern popular folk belief such as that surrounding fairies is invoked in the plot, action, and characterization of numerous early modern plays.[5] Class and gender roles are called into question in various ways over the course of this play, suggesting that the normative modes of class- and gender-based interaction are not, in fact, the only viable options. Shakespeare employs fairy lore in *Cymbeline* on behalf of a sociocultural critique of the ways in which social roles are circumscribed by class and gender position.

Socially prescribed gender behavior as well as class-coded conduct are distributed in *Cymbeline* along a sociocultural spectrum that spans from king to exiled mountain peasant, from heir to the throne to franklin's huswife. The effect of this distribution is to reveal the arbitrary nature of these role assignments; this effect is achieved in large measure by Shakespeare's reliance on fairy lore traditions. The play demonstrates that the roles assigned to women (such as nurse) might just as easily be taken by men, that the role of a page can be quite impressively played by a princess, and that, if necessity requires it, a man can play the "huswife." The play is triangulated by references to fairies at key plot points that also involve various levels of gender role pretense: Iachimo's midnight invasion of Imogen's chamber and person, the initial meeting of Imogen and her brothers, and the burial of Imogen in the tomb with Cloten's corpse. The gender ambiguity associated with fairies is ultimately linked to all of the principal characters in the play, but specific fairy references are localized to Imogen and the pivotal moments in her experience. Thus, as with the other plays that I have discussed, reading or viewing this play with an awareness of the fairy lore resonance in its narrative restores its heroine to empowered prominence.

A number of historical analyses of early modern literary, dramatic, and chronicle narratives have demonstrated the period to be one of exploration and experimentation with respect to the roles taken in the family as socially constructed institution.[6] Catherine Belsey, for instance, identifies a "contest for the meaning of the family in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries" that "momentarily unfixed the existing system of differences, and in the gap thus produced we are able to glimpse a possible meaning, an image of a mode of being, which is not a-sexual, nor bisexual, but which disrupts the system of differences on which sexual stereotyping depends."[7] By asking twenty-first-century scholars and critics to consider the possibility that gender-based familial roles were under construction during the early modern era, critics such as Belsey are ultimately suggesting that because today's critics know how the family story turned out, we

have a tendency to read the endings of sociohistorical texts that treat these roles and relationships as predetermined matters of course whereas those endings had not yet, in fact, been socially determined and institutionalized at the time when the plays were written. Thus, though to some critics it seems from the perspective of hindsight that the nature of the family interaction that concludes plays such as *Cymbeline* was always already predetermined, the social change that marked the early modern period meant that these theatrical narratives participated in the institutionalization of family structures we now see as normative rather than simply replicating them.[8]

Such a perspective renders all of the various gender roles and relationship arrangements depicted in romantic comedies and romances genuine, feasible options. The inconsistent assignment of gender roles within fairy lore participated in the sociocultural gender role experimentation necessary in a changing society. That is why such lore is invoked in plays that focus on the (re)construction of the family unit and the (re)distribution of roles within that unit. Much of the work that has been done on the significance of cross-dressing and gender bending in plays such as *Cymbeline* can be applied to the use that these and other early modern dramas make of the fairy figure. However, one aspect of sociohistorical contextualization marks a crucial difference between the fairy character and the cross-dressed heroine: early modern Britons believed fairies to behave in "gender-bent" ways (by human standards) naturally—of their own accord. Fairies did not have to pretend to be something that they were not in order to behave in this way; they were merely exhibiting a different facet of their metamorphic selves. Cross-gendered characters, on the other hand, were consciously adopting a different gender role than that which they were accustomed to playing and frequently remark on the artifice they will need to employ in order to carry off the performance successfully. Since the human imagination conceived of both the metamorphic fairies and cross-dressed human characters in plays, the interaction of the two creations in a single plot reveals much about the wants, needs, and desires motivating such inventions.

Noting the power of the poet, a virtual deity when "lifted up with the vigor of his own invention," Sir Philip Sidney asserts in his *Defense of Poesy* that the poet becomes, in effect, "another nature, in making things either better than nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goeth hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging within the zodiac of his own wit."[9] Although he does

not include them in his list of imaginative creations, the fairies, too, were forms created by poets though never seen in nature. When treated as actual beings hovering in a spiritual sphere somewhere between heaven and hell, fairies were anathema to staunch reform Protestants. When treated as Sidney treats them here—imaginative creations demonstrating the full range of God's creative power as refracted through humans—fairies became not challenges to the one, true God but evidence of his magnanimity toward his own wondrous creations. The power to imagine the fairies is, in this analysis, rendered a microcosmic instance of God's own immense creative power.

Sidney takes care to distinguish the imaginative constructions of poets, such as fairies, from idle dreaming. The rule he applies to discern the former from the latter is the same educative, role-model function held up as exemplary by antitheatricalists such as Phillip Stubbes. Sidney emphasizes that "the skill of each artificer standeth in that idea, or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. . . . Which delivering forth, also, is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air; but so far substantially it worketh, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him."[10] If today's literary critics learn aright why and how early modern Britons made up creatures who switched abhorrent fairy infants with more appealing human ones, performed the most laborious domestic drudgery at an astonishing rate of speed, and from time to time married a mortal man so long as he complied with a list of stipulations, we might learn much about the early modern desires that such creations answered. According to Sidney's formulation of imaginative poetic creation, "Once upon a time" might just as well be rendered "Wouldn't it be wonderful if. . . ."[11] Fairy lore and the plays that invoke it engage in the sort of chimerical vision questing for which Sidney lauded theatrical poesy.

Two decades after Sidney's work appeared, Thomas Heywood could still assert, "so bewitching a thing is liuely and well spirited action, that it hath power to new mold the harts of the spectators and fashion them to the shape of any noble and notable attempt".[12] Antitheatricalists such as Stephen Gosson and Phillip Stubbes were quick to point out that drama also had the power to shape its spectators to ignoble actions. Early modern drama actually had the capacity to do a bit of both, much as the fairies so often incorporated into it, who were as metamorphic as its actors and as morally ambiguous

as its plots, had. Those who attacked the theater differed in one essential way from those who defended it: the former condemned the drama for its potential social impact while the latter celebrated its transformative capacity. The potential social impact of a particular character or plot point was heightened when that figure or scenario invoked an entire body of popular tradition.

The Fairy Bride

Consider, for example, theatrical invocations of the fairy bride tradition, an example of the social ramifications of the imaginative exercise of creative power. Fairy brides could be the fairy spouses of mortal men, supernatural women who took control of marital arrangements including dowry and the nature of day-to-day spousal interactions. Given an existing body of popular tradition that claimed that women who mysteriously disappeared for varying lengths of time from their home had been abducted by the fairies to provide them with wives or paramours, fairy bride lore also potentially offered a woman who left her home for quite other reasons a socially acceptable explanation for her absence.[13] In either case, the tradition imagines the female spouse with a degree of power in her human home uncharacteristic of early modern marital practice.

The fairy bride tradition, with its emphasis on the supposed death of the wife and her intimate association with the fairy world either as a fairy herself or as a fairy abductee, has a close relationship to the plot and central characters of *Cymbeline*. According to Juliette Wood, much of the fairy bride lore that has been documented to date is of Welsh origin. This connection is particularly apt with respect to *Cymbeline*, since two of the central fairy scenes in the plot take place in the Welsh cave that serves as home and hideout for Belarius and the stolen princes. Although there is a great deal of variation in the details of the fairy bride plot, the central elements in the tales as Wood and Katharine Briggs recount them are consistent across geographical and chronological cultural boundaries. As Wood notes, ''About three dozen variants of the tale dating from the tenth to the twentieth century are known, and the very fact that the tale has attained such a curious, almost icon-like status, tells us much about perceptions of Welsh tradition *in and outside Wales*.''[14]

The three central traditions that contain plot details relevant to *Cymbeline* are the fairy bride tradition proper, a legend that Wood identifies as ''The Sons of the Dead Woman,'' and an intriguing tradition (about which frustratingly little is known) listed in the folk-

lore motif index as "The Calumniated Wife." In the fairy bride tradition, a mortal man acquires a fairy bride by using deception to learn a secret about her. This secret is quite often her name, as fairies assiduously hide their identity from humans since the utterance of their name activates a sort of charm, giving the human who speaks it power over them.[15] In a variant in the myth explaining how the mortal husband initially gains power over his supernatural wife, he might gain "possession of some object such as an item of clothing" that he can use to secure her in the mortal realm.[16] Both of these have relevance for *Cymbeline*, since Imogen gives Posthumus her mother's diamond ring and it is Iachimo's furtive knowledge of the mystical, pentacle-shaped mole on Imogen's breast that launches the central betrayal plot in the play.[17] Knowledge of Imogen's secret "blemish" gives Iachimo power over Posthumus and, by virtue of Posthumus's injudicious reaction, over Imogen, too. While the gift of a precious gem and a cautionary admonishment associated with it are characteristic of fairy lore in and of themselves, Katharine Briggs also recounts a tale that ties the details Shakespeare uses in *Cymbeline* even more directly to fairy lore. In this tale, a young maid is reputedly abducted by fairies and miraculously restored to her family a year later. Initially, the family is reluctant to accept her as their daughter upon her return, "but at length a ring on her finger and a mole on her neck convinced both mother and father that this was indeed their daughter."[18]

The fairy bride often has an impressive dowry, such as fairy cattle that yield tremendous amounts of milk but eat very little, and often presents her spouse a treasure he is supposed to keep at all costs. As Wood notes, in the mortal/fairy union, "wealth and prosperity are dependent on the wife."[19] The emphasis throughout the first act of *Cymbeline* on Posthumus as a mere court orphan and Imogen as a generous princess makes it readily apparent that such dependence for both wealth and prestige obtains in Posthumus's relationship to Imogen. In the opening scene of the play, for instance, Imogen is made the measure of Posthumus's worth. Two courtiers discuss Posthumus's banishment for the treasonous act of marrying the princess against the king's will; the first tells the second, "To his [Posthumus'] mistress, / For whom he now is banished, her own price / Proclaims how she esteemed him; and his virtue / By her election may be truly read" (I.i.50–53).[20]

Even as he is presenting her with a parting gift before accepting his banishment from the court, Posthumus, too, acknowledges his utter inability to match the gifts that Imogen is capable of giving him, herself included. After accepting a diamond ring of her, he

says: "As I my poor self did exchange for you / To your so infinite loss, so in our trifles / I still win of you. For my sake wear this. / It is a manacle of love; I'll place it / Upon this fairest prisoner" (I.i.121–25). This scene establishes the class and gender status disparity between Imogen and Posthumus from the play's outset. Imogen has more social and financial power than Posthumus as the heir to the British throne. From her monarchical vantage point, she commands the marital power to bestow favors, be they titles or diamonds, typically socially ascribed to males. The manacle Posthumus gives Imogen is a bracelet, which invokes the virtually universal aspect of the fairy bride tradition, the imposition of taboos upon the mortal spouse.[21] There are typically three, and they usually include injunctions against touching the fairy bride with steel, iron, or clay; feeding her mortal food; or striking her.[22] All three of these taboos are violated over the course of the play: Posthumus places a bracelet quite likely of metal[23] on Imogen's wrist before being banished into Italy; Belarius says upon encountering Imogen in the cave he shares with Guiderius and Arviragus that he would think she were a fairy, except that she is eating their food (III.vi.40–41); and, finally, Posthumus strikes Imogen immediately prior to their final reunion (V.v. 231.s.d.).

The fairy bride plot includes violence toward the fairy wife just as *Cymbeline* does and such violence occasions the bride's loss. The important element of this aspect of the fairy bride plot is that it is the mortal, human spouse who strikes his supernatural partner. The violence and victimization are part of the human society that the fairy bride has entered. Her injunction against such violence (and the subsequent loss of her when it is unleashed) constitutes a folkloric castigation of marital violence. The fairy bride need not ever return to her abusive spouse and only does so when he has manifested sufficient contrition to make it clear that such an incident will not recur. As does the fairy bride, Imogen chooses to return to her Posthumus. She invites him to embrace her, yet she challenges and chastises him for his past lack of trust; her line "Why did you throw your wedded lady from you?" (V.v.264) could refer to the blow that Posthumus has just given her or to his willingness to believe Iachimo's lies about her.

The plot of *Cymbeline* does not directly follow the fairy bride tradition since, according to fairy lore, these three taboos *precipitate* the mortal's loss of his fairy spouse. If he violates the taboos, his power to hold her in the human realm is invalidated and she is free to return to fairyland. Often, however, the mortal so genuinely laments her loss that the fairy spouse agrees to return to him, though she

usually does so without any of the previous fairy gifts. In *Cymbeline* Imogen is not a fairy and the taboos occur over the course of her separation from Posthumus, rather than precipitating it. However, when Imogen bestows her mother's diamond ring on Posthumus, she attaches a cautionary condition to the gift that Posthumus violates: "This diamond was my mother's. Take it, heart, / But keep it till you woo another wife / When Imogen is dead" (I.i.114–16). Not only does Posthumus fail to keep the ring (he loses it in his wager with Iachimo), but he himself orders Imogen killed. Imogen does, nevertheless, forgive him, but the wife who returns to Posthumus's arms is no longer heir to the throne. Thus, even Imogen returns to Posthumus minus some of the attributes that marked her out as an extraordinary bride.

The image of a self-deprecating male in pursuit of a lady love who moves in a much higher social sphere is also familiar from the poetry of courtly love, not just the fairy bride tradition. However, there are some important differences between Posthumus's situation and that of sonnet narrators. For one thing, though he identifies himself as beneath Imogen, Posthumus is in possession of her as his bride. This links the young couple more closely to the fairy bride tradition than to that of courtly love. In the courtly love tradition, love is often not requited. In the fairy bride tradition, it is. The mortal can claim the bride, rather than pine away for her. His failure to meet her marital conditions is what activates pining, not her refusal to return his love. Thus, the fairy bride tradition gave both the bride and the groom a measure of autonomy that the available narratives—real life and courtly love, respectively—did not necessarily supply. The (supernatual) woman was imaginatively extended a measure of marital power she would not possess in the real world, while the man was offered the possibility of enjoying a union with a woman whose social merit outstripped his own—provided that he behaved himself.

Although much less is known about the other two traditions, there are a number of similarities between the lore tagged in folkloric motif indexes as "The Calumniated Wife" and that associated with the fairy bride tradition.[24] The main difference is that the tradition concerns a mortal woman who is abducted into fairyland, often because her mortal husband has been ill treating her, rather than a wife who hails from fairyland. What is known of the lore strongly suggests that fairies would abduct calumniated wives out of sympathy for their plight and as a means of punishing the husband for his ill treatment—or at the very least giving him pause to reflect on his conduct. Those taken by the fairies were reputedly gone so long that

they were commonly believed to be dead, as Imogen is, until they stunned their loved ones by returning from fairyland as abruptly as they had been taken to it.[25] As I demonstrate later, there is much about Imogen's sojourn in Wales that invokes fairy belief, including the traditions that fairies inhabit caves, possess enchanting musical skills, have a proclivity for domestic labor, and abduct changeling children.

Remember, too, that fairyland is the land of the dead. *Cymbeline* concludes with the return of a whole host of characters believed to be dead, including Posthumus, Belarius, Guiderus, and Arviragus, as well as Imogen. As Meredith Skura notes, "people who had seemed dead come alive in strange ways."[26] Although such resurrections clearly have a Christian dimension, early modern lore associated fairies with the mysterious return of individuals from presumed death. One potential Christian connection such stories might have is to belief in purgatory, the halfway house for souls not deemed completely worthy of salvation. Reform Christianity did away with belief in purgatory, while Catholic doctrine continued to hold a sacred place for it. Thus, the suspended animation in which many of the characters in *Cymbeline* exist had an opaque religious inflection. Furthermore, the setting associated with many of the play's quasi-dead, Milford Haven, has a long-lived association with the fairies. "Somewhere off Milford Haven lie the Green Islands of the Sea, the invisible country of the fairies."[27] Wirt Sikes claims that these green meadows of the sea are thought to be fairy islands.[28]

"With Female Fairies Will His Tomb Be Haunted"

Until they managed to wend their way back to the mortal realm, people who either were abducted into or stumbled upon fairyland were believed to be dead by their friends and family members, just as everyone in the play considers Imogen dead, for one reason (Posthumus thinks Pisanio has obeyed his execution order) or another (Belarius and the boys think that her drug-induced state of suspended animation is actually death). "His" tomb in the excerpt quoted at the beginning of this section is that of Fidele, the boy-page identity adopted by Imogen during her sojourn in Wales.[29] Thus, the tomb of a woman in the disguise of a page, taken for an effeminate boy, is blessed with the guardianship of female fairies, an oddly specific gender designation for creatures notoriously non-gender-specific (in human, socially constructed terms, at any rate) in their behavior. This pagan celebration of fairy-inflected last rites coheres

with the gender ambiguity of the person for whom those rites are performed and of those performing them. Socially constructed gender roles such as page and nurse are turned inside out in this scene, as well as the social stereotype of woman as the locus of emotion and man as the center of reason.

Without speaking directly to the presence of fairy lore in the play, Marjorie Garber suggests that for critics reading *Cymbeline* today: "this experimental play is perhaps best approached in an experimental way, by taking as one controlling assumption the idea that the play's deep structure has something to do with deciphering 'seeming,' with reading the truth behind human actions and motives, behind riddles and dreams—and by relating that assumption to the fairy-tale quality implicit in romance, which for my own purposes I would like to call 'providence.'"[30] The deciphering process that Garber describes here has a particular application to the play's creative exploration of the roles and behavior "proper" to a particular social station, gender, and so forth. The endless disguise shifting and identity fabrication in *Cymbeline* employed to enact this process of exploration have both an implicit connection to fairies—since, as I have discussed in preceding chapters, they were believed to be capable of changing shape at will—and an explicit connection since fairies are directly referenced at three key moments in the play. In addition to having changeable bodies, fairies were associated with "seeming" by virtue of the metamorphic nature of their realm. Katharine Briggs paraphrases the pervasive tradition that fairies inhabit underground caves that "seem to be magnificent castles to the glamourized eyes of humans until their sight is cleared by a touch of the fairy ointment, when they are seen to be rough and primitive."[31] *Cymbeline* depicts a fairy transformation of the opposite kind: rustics inhabiting a cave turn out to be princes with power in the court.

Roger Warren links three central scenes in the play's action—Iachimo's exploration of Imogen's person and chamber, Imogen's burial and entombment with Cloten's body (which she takes for Posthumus's), and Posthumus's dream—to the dreamlike state of the characters involved. He finds that these pivotal scenes "are linked by one central fact: the heroine or hero lies asleep during part or all of them. This has led several directors to interpret the bizarre situations as dreams, or nightmares, so that in the moments of extremest theatrical virtuosity, the action on stage can emerge as the externalisation of those dreams."[32] What Warren does not note, however, is that all three of these scenes are also linked by their references to fairies. Not only are fairies implicitly associated with dreams in popular lore, including its theatrical manifestation in

plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but they are also directly invoked in each of the scenes that Warren discusses. Though Posthumus experiences such dreamlike moments, the fairy-linked Imogen has more of them, and her experiences ultimately impact the overall plot more powerfully.

As with Dol Common in *The Alchemist*, quite a number of critics have lined up to express their dissatisfaction with Imogen as a heroine.[33] She is universally considered lackluster when compared to her comedic cross-dressed counterparts, such as Rosalind in *As You Like It*.[34] However, if, as I did with Dol in the preceding chapter, one places Imogen in her proper context—as the centerpiece of a play replete with gender role reversals and transgressions linked to fairy tradition—her conduct becomes more intriguing and less spiritless. In *Cymbeline*, Posthumus, Arviragus, Belarius, and Cymbeline have feminine traits or points of identification (i.e., Belarius plays mother and father to Guiderius and Arviragus; Arviragus speaks flowery, fairy-inflected words over Imogen's grave; Cymbeline claims to be "mother to the birth of three"). Imogen, on the other hand, exhibits masculine strength of mind and purpose as a woman and appears most stereotypically feminine when dressed as the boy, Fidele.

At the outset of the play Imogen is an assertive, indomitable figure undaunted by her father's outraged banishment of her independently chosen spouse, not intimidated by the ill will his evil queen bears her, utterly unimpressed by Cloten's loutish attempts to woo her, and not the least bit bashful about saying so in every case. Sounding for all the world like the self-absorbed Lear, Cymbeline in his initial direct address to Imogen is accusatory; her response utterly rejects filial guilt:

> *Cymbeline* O disloyal thing,
> That shouldst repair my youth, thou heap'st
> A year's age on me.
> *Imogen* I beseech you, sir,
> Harm not yourself with your vexation.
> I am senseless of your wrath; a touch more rare
> Subdues all pangs, all fears.
>
> (I.i.133–38)

Earlier in the same scene, Imogen encounters the Queen, easily chipping the gilt from her leaden lies. Significantly, the first word that Imogen speaks in a play focused on stripping away the superficialities of class- and gender-based prescriptions and proscriptions is *dissembling*: "O / Dissembling courtesy! How fine this tyrant / Can tickle where she wounds!" (I.i.84–86). Overtly acknowledging the

ways in which her behavior violates social expectations for her gender and royal roles, Imogen concludes a feud with Cloten, her stepbrother and spouse aspirant, by tartly observing: "You put me to forget a lady's manners / By being so verbal" (II.iii.107–8). These attributes of Imogen's have a fairy association as well. Juliette Wood observes of the fairy bride tradition that "Another notable quality of the Fairy Bride is her assertiveness." W. H. Schofield adds that the fairy wife has no intention "'in the future to be a wife patiently enduring all sorts of indignities, but a proud supernatural mistress whose commands when not followed to the letter bring sorrow to him whose life even is in her hands'".[35] Although many critics are quick to berate Imogen for pathetic passivity during her cross-dressed sojourn in Wales, few dispute her assertiveness in the British court, where she defies her monarch and father with respect to her marital choice (or lack thereof, as far as Cloten is concerned).[36] Imogen is self-assured and bold in her initial, female incarnation.

Although she may find that she is conducting herself in a less than feminine fashion in her interactions with her lusty stepbrother, the text at this point in the play calls on the actor portraying Imogen to achieve feats of femininity far beyond the physical reach of a boy actor. The scene immediately preceding Imogen's early morning altercation with Cloten is the first important fairy-resonant scene in the play: Iachimo's midnight mission of stealth into Imogen's bedchamber. Having secreted himself in a trunk stowed in Imogen's room, Iachimo waits while Imogen reads in bed (the tale of Philomel's rape by Tereus, significantly) until midnight. When Imogen asks the time, her maid tells her it is "almost midnight, madam" (II.ii.2)—the fairy time, the witching hour.

When she puts the book aside, Imogen prays: "To your protection I commend me, gods. / From *fairies* and the tempters of the night / Guard me, beseech ye" (II.ii.8–10, emph. mine). David Bevington glosses *fairies* here as "evil spirits."[37] As we have seen, fairies were directly associated with illicit nighttime temptations of the kind from which the chaste Imogen prays to be shielded. Further, since her siblings were snatched from their cradle, Imogen may have a particular fear of the nighttime abductions for which fairies were (in)famous. After he has finished taking note of the room and her body—the better to convince Posthumus that she has sexually betrayed him—Iachimo recognizes the danger of his position and resolves to get back into the trunk even though he is enjoying himself immensely: "Though this a heavenly angel, hell is here" (II.ii.50). This conflation of heaven and hell in Imogen's person/chamber is interesting in light of folk traditions that conceived of fairies as the

inhabitants of a region between heaven and hell. If initially Iachimo seems to be an evil fairy, by the end of the scene, fairy identity has been attached to Imogen.

The most intriguing passage in this scene in terms of its gender implications, however, is the piece of evidence that Iachimo considers his trump card. He first takes the bracelet with which Posthumus gifted Imogen at their parting, a present of some import with respect to fairy bride lore, as I have already noted. However, the coup de grâce, in Iachimo's view, is his discovery of a mole on Imogen's left breast. As Peter Stallybrass notes: ''To make the left breast the object of this voyeuristic scene is to focus our attention on one of the sites of cultural differentiation of gender. But that site produces antithetical readings; Imogen's swelling breast; the breast of a boy actor. It is as if within the dramatic fiction, the fetishistic signs of presence are forced to confront the absences which mark the actor's body.''[38] In other words, Imogen ultimately looks most masculine when the audience is supposed to take the boy actor portraying her at his most feminine—gorgeously naked before the voyeuristic gaze of the lascivious Iachimo. Iachimo is hovering over Imogen at this point, so the audience need never see the body of the boy actor portraying her. However, this scene explicitly invokes her physical femininity, reminding the audience that they cannot find these attributes on the body of the boy impersonating her. If they crane their neck to catch a glimpse of the body that so enthralls Iachimo, they will not see what he ''sees.'' What Stallybrass does not address in his analysis is the fact that the play turns this gender twist back the other way once Imogen dons the apparel of a male page.

''Boy into Woman, Commoner into Aristocrat''

Stallybrass does consider the ways in which issues of gender are bound up in issues of class throughout *Cymbeline*.[39] Steve Brown divides the ''boys'' in Shakespeare's plays into four groups: adult men who are called ''boy'' as an insult, female characters disguised as boys, the noble or royal boy (such as Arviragus and Guiderius), and the ''anonymous'' actual boys in the plays, such as Falstaff's page, Robin.[40] According to this rubric, both Imogen and her brothers would be classified as ''boys'' in the Welsh scenes, she because of her male disguise, they because of their status as royal youths (albeit unknown to them). Regardless of the fact that they are all three of royal birth, identifying Imogen, Guiderius, and Arviragus as ''boys'' constitutes both a class- and gender-inflected social designation.

Brown suggests that boys played women on the early modern stage because boys inhabited a social position parallel to that occupied by women in their subordination to adult males. Woman, page, and boy were interchangeable physical categories with respect to the audience perception of the body of the boy actor. In this shared second-class status, women, pages, and boy actors became, via a class-based sociocultural logic, interchangeable social categories and identities.[41] Thus, when a boy actor entered the performance space, the audience might be able to identify him as any of these characters—an assessment based on costume, general demeanor or gestures, or the lines he delivered. In the case of Imogen/Fidele, however, an early modern audience could see aspects of all of these typical boy parts simultaneously. Much as the transparent, airy bodies of the fairies with whom Imogen is linked, the body of the boy actor portraying Imogen served as a transparent sheet through which the social roles of princess, huswife, and page could be projected.

After revealing Posthumus's suspicions of Imogen's infidelity and his execution orders to her, Pisanio suggests that she disguise herself in order to sneak at least close enough to him that "report should render him hourly to your ear" (III.iv.151). In order to accomplish this, Pisanio suggests that Imogen adopt the disguise of a boy page:

> You must forget to be a woman, change
> Command into obedience; fear and niceness—
> The handmaids of all women, or, more truly,
> Woman its pretty self—into a waggish courage;
> Ready in gibes, quick-answered, saucy, and
> As quarrelous as the weasel.
>
> (III.iv.155–60)

Stallybrass notes that "The anti-theatricalists . . . feared the power of clothes to produce *new* subjects, to metamorphose boy into woman, commoner into aristocrat."[42] *Cymbeline* runs this transformation in reverse, showing a woman's metamorphosis into a boy and an aristocrat's—a princess's, no less—metamorphosis into a page. Imogen's transformation is, socioculturally speaking, one step forward and two steps back.[43] The saucy ill-temperedness to which Pisanio urges Imogen sounds quite like the behavior we have already witnessed in the princess's sharp exchanges with her father-king and her stepbrother-wooer. The role Pisanio asks Imogen to play does not seem to be a stretch for her.

This pep talk notwithstanding, Imogen is at her lowest point—

physically and psychologically—during her sojourn in Wales in the guise of Fidele, the boy page. There are many instances of doubling in the play, both of parallel characters (Belarius/Pisanio, Cornelius/Pisanio) and of contrasting characters (Posthumus/Iachimo, Posthumus/Cloten, Cloten/Guiderius). Imogen/Fidele is another such pairing, though few critics discuss this point.[44] Perhaps because Imogen herself plays the parts assigned to both aspects of her persona the effect is less obvious. Having wished aloud for the recovery of her brothers so that they might take the throne and leave her to settle into her marriage to Posthumus, Imogen becomes, in a sense, a brother to herself immediately before she stumbles upon her actual siblings in Wales.[45] Imogen is worn down by grief and fruitless wandering at this point in the play, and even her most loyal fans must confess that she is whiny in the first part of the scene in which she happens upon her brothers' cavern home. It is in the "Fidele" persona that Imogen gives way to the weakness and heartsickness that Posthumus's betrayal of her and presumptive death catalyze.[46] Since she plays this part herself, it is easier to fixate on these attributes as hers specifically than it is with Posthumus's doubles, who are characters external to him. Shakespeare effectively undermines the "naturalness" of femininity and masculinity by depicting Imogen as manifesting the traits culturally attributed to women when she is dressed as a boy, and by having her assert her authority in a way socially consigned to masculine privilege when she wears her woman's weeds.

The scene in which her brothers and their forcibly adoptive father, Belarius, first encounter Imogen is the second significant fairy scene in the play. As I noted in chapter three, "Englishmen and Scots who lived in Wales were thought to be fairies."[47] Imogen is a British princess wandering alone, disguised as a boy, lost in Wales. All of these details combine to suggest her general liminality—a woman in man's apparel, a stranger in a strange land—and to link her to the fairies for whom Belarius mistakes her on first sight. She happens upon the cave of Belarius and her brothers when tired and hungry and helps herself to their food. When they return from hunting and find her, Belarius says: "Stay, come not in. / But that it eats our victuals, I should think / Here were a fairy" (III.vi.39–41). Imogen is initially an utterly gender ambiguous "it" and then the equally gender ambiguous "fairy." Since she is eating their food, Belarius decides that Imogen must be an angel, and only then does he apply a specific gender designation: "By Jupiter, an angel! Or, if not, / An earthly paragon! Behold divineness / No elder than a boy!" (III.vi.42–44).

The scene's fairy inflection continues when Imogen offers the men money in exchange for the food that she has eaten. Arviragus scoffs, "All gold and silver rather turn to dirt, / As 'tis no better reckoned but of those / Who worship dirty gods" (III.vi.53–55). These lines have a double fairy reference, both because fairy gold was thought to be deceptive in precisely this way, and because Protestants abhorred belief in fairies as the creation of false gods. If one had fairy wealth, revelation of this fact to another mortal or the failure to observe any other fairy rules for its safekeeping would cause the coin to turn to dust.[48] Despite his rejection of her money, Arviragus welcomes Imogen/Fidele with open arms. Imogen may be an outsider in Wales at the outset, but Belarius and the boys quickly incorporate her in their all-male community. Their repeated observations of her effeminacy (which are not derogatory) and the overt wish that she were a woman make it clear that they would be equally welcoming to her if they knew her true gender.

Suggesting the fairy-inflected nature of their own pseudochangeling upbringing under the paternalistic care of their abductor-father, Guiderius and Arviragus react to Imogen much as a wilderness youth described in Robert Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* would. Burton describes how

> a child that was brought up in the wilderness, from his infancy, by an old Hermit: now come to man's estate, he saw by chance two comely women wandering in the woods: he asked the old man what creatures they were, he told him Fairies; after awhile talking casually, the Hermit demanded of him, which was the pleasantest sight that ever he saw in his life? he readily replied, the two Fairies he spied in the wilderness. So that, without doubt, there is some secret loadstone in a beautiful woman, a magnetick power, a natural inbred affection, which moves our concupiscence.[49]

The easy slippage here in Burton's writing from the mysterious allure of the fairies to the temptations of the flesh that originate in actual women is telling. For many reasons, this passage is applicable to Imogen: Iachimo reacts to her beauty with a malevolent lasciviousness that in turn drives Posthumus to the brink of homicidal sexual jealousy. Even her initial meeting with Belarius and her brothers has a strong sexual energy but barely mitigated by revelation that she is a boy. For example, once Belarius has offered to share their humble abode with Imogen/Fidele, addressing her as "fair youth" (III.vi.63), Guiderius tells her, "Were you a woman, youth, / I should woo hard but to be your groom in honesty" (III.vi.68–69).

Even though they do not realize that "Fidele" *is* a woman, Arvira-

gus, Guiderius, and Belarius continually address and discuss her in feminized terms. When they leave to go hunting, for instance, Belarius tells Imogen/Fidele, ''You must be our huswife'' (IV.ii.46). Imogen has, in fact, already played the ''huswife'' on her own initiative before Belarius casts her in this role—it is her idea to disguise herself as a ''franklin's huswife'' (III.ii.76) when she and Pisanio make their initial plans to meet Posthumus at Milford Haven. Thus, Imogen has already dropped rather precipitously in class before Pisanio ever suggests that she adopt the disguise of a male page.[50] Many critics find it offensive that even the cross-dressed Imogen is consigned to the role of a ''huswife,'' but this is a rather narrow view of the Welsh scenes and their gender role flexibility. Contrary to Bruce Smith's assertion that Guiderius and Arviragus have ''never seen a woman before, [and] don't know what to make of 'Fidele,' ''[51] Belarius's reminiscent soliloquies make it clear that the boys remember their ''foster mother''/abductor, Euriphile. They have a sufficient memory of her alive to recall vividly the experience of burying her. Since her death, they have shared with Belarius all of the roles that are divided up among men and women in the court and community they have left behind.[52] They continue this process of division once Fidele arrives. Practicality (she is sick) rather than her inherent femininity dictates that she stay at the cave and play ''huswife'' while they go hunt. As Carol Thomas Neely notes, ''Imogen is relieved to participate in this asexual family. . . . Asexual, unhierarchical, and gender neutral, this family is a welcome escape from the tyranny of Imogen's father, the cruelty of the Queen, and the degraded sexuality of her stepbrother, Cloten, Iachimo, and Posthumus.''[53] It is in this world that Imogen has the realization that the hierarchies imposed in the court are false measures of individual worth: ''These are kind creatures. Gods, what lies I have heard! / Our courtiers say all's savage but at court. / Experience, O, thou disprov'st report!'' (IV.ii.32–34).

Meanwhile, the resident court savage, Cloten, is hot on Imogen's trail dressed in her husband's clothes, determined to rape her while wearing them in defiance of Imogen's preference for the court orphan. Cloten pursues Imogen to Milford Haven where he encounters her brother, Guiderius, instead. After a class-based exchange of insults, Guiderius beheads Cloten. Simultaneous with Cloten's beheading, Imogen has taken the sleeping potion that Cornelius gave to the Queen purporting it to be a deadly poison and that the Queen, in turn, passed to Pisanio, claiming it to be an elixir of miraculous healing properties.[54] Faced with two corpses, Belarius and the boys entomb them together. Imogen awakes to find a headless

body wearing her husband's clothes and draws the obvious conclusion. The most salient feature of this scene for the purposes of the present discussion is the fact that Imogen has just awakened from a drug-induced sleep. Her initial lines make this clear, conflating as they do her solo journey into Wales with her life as "a cave keeper / And cook to honest creatures" (IV.ii.299–300), an experience that she dismisses as a "dream . . . a bolt of nothing shot at nothing, / Which the brain makes of fumes" (IV.ii.300, 303–4). Dreaming herself awake, awaking to think that she has dreamed, she accepts as real an illusory image of her husband's corpse, accepting the superficial, his clothes, as the thing itself. Blessed to her grave with fairy guardians, she mourns as a tragically young widow in the attire of a boy page, the same gender-bent and class-coded disguise in which she will finally be reunited with the husband she now thinks dead.

Convinced that it is her husband's body beside her, Imogen gives way to a lengthy lamentation. Douglas Bruster dismissively equates Imogen's reaction to that of "the stock pathetic heroine of Renaissance melodrama."[55] What he fails to consider, however, is the fact that she is dressed as a boy at this moment. Thus, "she" appears in the form of the actor who is portraying "her" and, indeed, any/all of those stock characters of Renaissance melodrama. This gender role reversal underscores the artificiality of Imogen's performance of the role of a page, of the boy actor's portrayal of Imogen, and, ultimately, of any male or female's portrayal of his or her socially prescribed gender role or status position. She behaves in the manner most in keeping with stereotypes of femininity when she is dressed in male attire and is supposed to be playing at being masculine. Robert Kimbrough notes that while Imogen is dressed as a boy "her words and behavior are what Elizabethans would consider to be effeminate and fearful."[56] The suggestion seems to be that effeminate mannerisms of the boy-heroine will remind the audience that this is, in fact, a woman in disguise since that "woman" is actually a boy in the first place. However, Kimbrough does not note that Imogen's own words and behavior have been anything but effeminate and fearful when she was dressed as a woman.

The Woman's Part

When burying the boy he has loved as a brother—little dreaming that "he" is actually his sister—Arviragus is berated for his effeminacy. Guiderius bestows an odd benediction, wishing that female fairies might guard the tomb of his decidedly feminine brother

(IV.22.219). Arviragus responds with a lengthy lamentation focused on flowers and birds—two natural elements with numerous fairy associations. He is interrupted and chastised for his "wenchlike words" by his elder, warrior brother (IV.ii.232). As Maurice Hunt notes, "Arviragus' elegy for Imogen is an example of relatively delicate artistry. Its language is enameled, 'poetic' in the traditional 'feminine' sense."[57] Arviragus's effeminacy coupled with Imogen's cross-dressed persona combine to produce a burial scene that captures in a remarkable way the ambiguous nature of fairies. Moreover, Belarius attributes Imogen/Fidele's death to melancholy, an affliction often attributed to fairies.[58] He apostrophizes:

> O Melancholy,
> Who ever yet could sound thy bottom, find
> The ooze to show what coast thy sluggish care
> Might eas'liest harbor in? . . .
> Thou diedst, a most rare boy, of melancholy.
> (IV.ii.205–8, 210)

It is fitting that this boy-woman, this princess-page, is given a fairy-linked cause of death when she is not actually dead, eulogized in the "wenchlike words" of her stranger-brother, a peasant-prince, and sung to her grave with the benediction "With female fairies will his tomb be haunted" (IV.ii.218).

Imogen is the character linked most closely to the fairy realm in the play, not only because she is overtly connected to it by Belarius and Guiderius, but because fairies are implicitly associated with the key experiences of the portion of her life captured in *Cymbeline*: the blending of gender roles and gender attributes in a single entity, the psychic blurring of the real and the unreal, and the return to life from the apparent finality of death. If personal wholeness arises from an understanding of all of the strengths and weaknesses humans are subject to regardless of gender, if mental wholeness arises from genuine openness to that which lurks in the mind's darkest recesses as well as that which is readily apparent to it, and if death can only be understood as a phase in life and life only appreciated when bracketed with birth and death, then fairies are perfectly logical outgrowths of the human struggle to sort out these enigmas of existence.

The play's gender bending is not localized to Imogen, however, but is a pervasive presence throughout the narrative. In fact, if one applies Posthumus's infamous "woman's part" soliloquy to the characters in the play, it becomes apparent that the male characters con-

duct themselves in a manner much more in keeping with the characteristics he enumerates than the central female exemplar in the play, Imogen, ever does.[59] Infuriated at the thought that Imogen has forfeited her marital chastity in an adulterous liaison with Iachimo, Posthumus rages:

> For there's no motion
> That tends to vice in man but I affirm
> It is the woman's part. Be it lying, note it,
> The woman's; flattering, hers, deceiving, hers;
> Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
> Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
> Nice longing, slanders, mutability,
> All faults that have a name, nay, that hell knows,
> Why, hers, in part or all, but rather all.
>
> (II.v.20–28)

The lying and deception that Posthumus locates in women are manifested most clearly in the play by the male characters, including Posthumus himself. Iachimo lies to both Imogen and Posthumus about her chastity (or lack thereof). Belarius deceived his master and monarch in stealing his sons from their nursery—a duplicitous act of vengeance. Posthumus lies to Imogen to lure her to Milford Haven so that Pisanio can murder her in a reckless act of revenge based on hearsay. Pisanio adds to his master's falsehood by initially colluding in it and then transmuting it, when he reports the princess's death to his master. Even Imogen weaves the most elaborate web of lies ever linked to her (about her identity) when she is disguised as Fidele, a boy. The point of all this is not to play a game of hot potato with gender stereotypes or to prove that women "really" possess attributes stereotypically assigned to men, and vice versa. What the gender ambiguity attributed to the characters in this play and to figures of fairy lore generally demonstrates is that men are just as capable of duplicity as women; women can be as strong and assertive as men; and men can be mother-nurturers as effectively as women. Fairy lore constitutes a narrative protest to gender-based stereotypes regarding character traits and capabilities.

Posthumus begins to participate in fairy-inflected activities relatively late in the play's action and, significantly, only after he has repented Imogen's supposed murder by his command and decided to trust that she was a loyal wife despite the trumped-up evidence that Iachimo has provided to the contrary. Exhausted from his valiant military efforts in defense of Britain against the Romans, Posthumus falls asleep incarcerated in a British prison, expressing the wish to

dream of Imogen even as he sinks into unconsciousness (V.iv.28–29).[60] Instead, Posthumus dreams of his long-lost family, who appear to him in a vision demanding of the gods why they have put their son through so much "earth-vexing smart" (V.iv.42). Ultimately, Jupiter appears to answer their complaints, averring that Posthumus "shall be lord of Lady Imogen, / And happier much by his affliction made" (V.iv.107–8). He then bestows on Posthumus a tablet that will confirm the truth of this vision (V.iv.110 s.d.). Mingling pagan gods and fairies, Posthumus wakes to treat his vision initially as a dream; on finding the tablet, he asks in amazement, "What fairies haunt this ground?" (V.iv.133). Child of solitude, adult lost in melancholy,[61] Posthumus is comforted with sweet dreams while Imogen, heir to the throne and locus of universal admiration, is wracked with nightmares, the horror of which bleed into her waking world.[62] Posthumus's and Imogen's visions differ markedly in quality, but not in kind. Both are dreams, the province of fairies. Fairies' order looks like chaos to human eyes and things that seem impossible by human standards are the order of the day in fairyland. It is in keeping with their nature that the dreams associated with them make nightmare visions seem as tangible as stone tablets and deliver genealogical verities in the context of preposterous dreams.

Fairy Rebellion

Marjorie Garber subsumes the dream moments in *Cymbeline* under the motif of "seeming" in the play, which, as she notes, can have both a positive and a negative connotation: "dream, fantasy, and wonder, on the one hand, and on the other deception, guile, pretense."[63] Fairies embody both sides of this dichotomy and are, therefore, logical figures to invoke in a play that likewise considers it. The morality in *Cymbeline* is, in essence, a fairy morality. Just as fairies cannot be whitewashed into angelic goodness, nor blackened with purely demonic evil, the actions of the characters in *Cymbeline* defy clear moral designations. Cornelius tricks the Queen into accepting a faux poison because he suspects her intentions—and rightly so. Belarius steals Cymbeline's sons—and the heirs to the throne—because he feels wronged by both king and country. Imogen defies her father in her marital choice and flees the realm that she is supposed to rule ultimately. Guiderius beheads the son of the reigning queen—an audacious act by a man who does not yet know his own royal heritage.

Constance Jordan notes that Cymbeline's kingdom is paradoxi-

cally preserved by the "outlaw" actions of three figures who rebel against his authority:

> Conspicuously unwise in his toleration of the queen's tyranny, Cymbeline's misgovernment is mended, to a degree, by Cornelius, the queen's physician, and Pisanio, Posthumus's servant, who disobey or in some way contravene the commands of their superiors. They do so deceptively and without attracting attention. A third, Belarius, Cymbeline's soldier-courtier, represents a more critical case. His abduction of Cymbeline's sons is actually an instance of treason; it makes him an "outlaw." (4.2.138).[64]

Jordan fails to consider the importance of Imogen's actions, which not only are defiant in precisely the ways Jordan discusses here, but also serve as the linchpin linking the other instances of rebellion in the play. As do Hermia in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Ann Page in *Merry Wives*, Imogen defies the patriarchal figures who could rightfully rule her. Her bold decision to marry Posthumus goes hand in hand with her courageous decision to flee the court in order to meet him after his banishment. Her sojourn in Wales ultimately leads to the restoration of the lost princes as well. As do the woods outside Athens and Windsor, the Welsh world into which Imogen flees thrives under fairy auspices.[65]

As Roger Warren notes, "once the Giacomo [*sic*]/Posthumus plot has got the play going, the momentum is then sustained by the Belarius/princes plot, with Innogen [*sic*] as the character who moves between the two plots and holds them together."[66] Cloten, for example, would never have gone to Wales had he not been following Imogen to Milford Haven. Therefore, Guiderius would never have had occasion to kill Cloten and, ultimately, the reunion of the royal family would have been stymied. Cymbeline is prepared to reward the boys and Belarius for their work in the battle against the Romans, but Belarius is not moved to reveal their true identity to him until Cymbeline sorrowfully concedes that he will have to execute Guiderius for killing Cloten because the latter was a prince.

Order in the play is thus preserved, paradoxically, by disorder. It is fitting, therefore, that fairies, marginal, outlaw figures by their very nature, are evoked repeatedly in its course. Rather than containing the play's disorder by the marital and monarchical order that is reestablished at the play's end,[67] Shakespeare ultimately suggests that there is more than one effective mode of social order. The play problematizes conventional ideas of social order by presenting characters such as Imogen and Belarius who achieve laudable goals by following unconventional courses of action. Just as fairies were dis-

tinguished—but barely—from demons in the early modern moral rubric, so, too, is the species of "productive disorder" engaged in by Imogen, Pisanio, Belarius, Guiderius, and Posthumus distinguished from the malicious acts of purely destructive disorder that Iachimo and Cloten practice. Although the ending is a happy one with its series of revelations, reunions, and restorations, the court has been shaken to its core. The presumptive sole heir has been thought dead and is restored in the guise of a male page to both father and husband, pleased to cede her place to her rustic brothers, who are utterly lacking in courtly niceties, valiant though they may be. In this sense, too, Imogen is aligned with the fairies for one of whom Belarius originally takes her—revered as the givers of status-raising gifts, fairy princesses were perfectly capable of transforming peasants into princes.[68] As Leah Marcus concludes, "The play ends in an openness to the winds of change, a zest for expansion and renewal, as though to intimate that such transformation is possible."[69] The order restored at the end of the play looks familiar, but the unusual nature of the route taken to get there necessarily affects our sense of this conclusion. We are given no indication in the play's final scenes that these heretofore unconventional characters are suddenly going to begin behaving in conventional ways. The possibilities have been demonstrated to be endless; the certainties, however, are much less clear since both death and taxes have proved unreliable.

Marco Mincoff pays a great deal of attention to the elements of the play that create "the spirit of wonder."[70] As many other critics of *Cymbeline* do, he goes right to the brink of discussing the fairy elements in the play but ultimately does not. For instance, he notes that Guiderius and Arviragus emerge "straight from the *fairyland* of their cave" to do battle against the Romans, but he does not in any way explore that term or its implications.[71] Fairies were popularly supposed to inhabit caves or the interiors of mountains or "fairy mounds" accessible through a cavelike entrance seldom discernible to the naked eye.[72] At two of the key moments in the play in which Imogen is associated with fairies she is in a cave. Belarius insists that he would take her for a fairy if she were not eating their food when they return from hunting and find her inside their cave. Then, Arviragus reports that he found Imogen's body on the floor of their cave at the beginning of the scene in which the three men perform her burial rites and wish that female fairies might guard her tomb (IV.ii.211–15).

Furthermore, caves are linked in popular lore to another fairy characteristic relevant to both Belarius and the boys and Imogen, musicality. In his eighteenth-century collection of strange tales of

Fairies attempt to lure a spurred knight into their cavelike fairy hill in Olaus Magnus, *Historia de Gentibus Septentrionalibus* (Antwerp, 1558). Reproduced with the kind permission of Janet Bord and the Fortean Picture Library.

the supernatural and the paranormal, John Aubrey summarizes an entire tradition of narratives about those abducted by fairies into "strange underground places . . . where they used musicall Instruments, viols, and Lutes."[73] In the appendix to *Children of the Revels*, Michael Shapiro notes the implicit invocation of a tradition linking fairies and music in plays featuring fairy characters. He notes that, "When choral groups were assigned a collective role, they were usually cast as muses, nymphs, shepherds, or fairies, probably because of the traditional association of music with such groups."[74] The possession of these fairy attainments by Imogen and her brothers serves to set Cloten decisively apart from them since he so clearly lacks musical facility. Cloten is marked from the outset as an irretrievable soul by virtue of his utter lack of a link to the fairy realm. Imogen beguiles her brothers with her lovely singing voice—"How angel-like he sings!" says Arviragus (IV.ii.49)—and is talented enough that Pisanio suggests she rely on this skill to prefer herself to Caius Lucius as a servant: "If that his head have ear in music—doubtless / With joy he will embrace you" (III.iv.175–76). Her brothers, for their part, sing a beautiful dirge for her after her death has been announced with Belarius's "ingenious instrument" (IV.ii.188, 261–84). Cloten, however, has to hire musicians to woo Imogen with song

(II.iii.11–13). He is a hopeless case because he is so clearly outside the reach of the fairy benediction that settles over virtually everyone by the final act. He and his evil mother are, significantly, the only characters who have actually died by the end of the play.

The two princes (Polydor/Guiderius and Cadwal/Arviragus) in *Cymbeline* are most directly associated with early modern fairy lore about changelings. The play's opening scene includes the expository narrative of their abduction: "Mark it: The eldest of them at three years old, / I' the swaddling-clothes the other, from their nursery / Were stol'n, and to this hour no guess in knowledge / Which way they went" (I.i.57–61).[75] Thus, the two princes have a fairy association (as changelings), as does Belarius, since he steals Cymbeline's sons from their cradle and raises them in a cave, a common fairy habitation. The restoration of Cymbeline's sons in the final act has a fairy lore connection, too, since it was commonly believed that if human parents who had been given a changeling took adequate care of the infant, they could be rewarded with the return of their own, proper child. One could construe Posthumus as the "changeling" Cymbeline takes up in his own sons' stead. The good care Cymbeline takes of Posthumus (until he elopes with his daughter) leads to the return of his own children. Cymbeline's sons have, under Belarius, a fairy-inflected upbringing by a male nursemaid in a Welsh cavern that makes them fit heirs to an inclusive realm in which the king claims for himself maternal attributes, military victory does not produce tyrannical dominance, and appearances—death, social status, loyalty—prove deceptive.[76]

Although Posthumus is not malformed or mentally deficient as changeling children were popularly presumed to be, he has a convenient doppelganger to take on that burden for him. Oafish, brutish, and rude, the Queen's son, Cloten, possesses characteristics quite often attributed to a fairy changeling.[77] As Michael Taylor observes, Imogen's waking moments in the tomb with Cloten's corpse constitute "a nightmare degradation in which the honest creatures of her waking hours have vanished, leaving behind in their place a headless changeling whose reality can be only fleetingly doubted in those blurred moments 'twixt sleep and wake."[78] The doubled Posthumus and Cloten therefore become a bifurcated changeling. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*), changeling could refer to an inferior substitute generally, in addition to the odious fairy replacement for a stolen child. Posthumus is the one initially bereft of his rightful noble status and ultimately of his rightful noble wife. Cloten is the brutish recipient of the noble status of which Posthumus is

stripped; he likewise replaces Posthumus as Imogen's gruesome "bedfellow" and, for a time at least, as her mourned dead spouse.

Fairy Brides and Domestic Violence

The fairy bride tradition has a particular relevance for the play's final scene and that theatrical moment that so distresses critics, particularly those of feminist inclinations: the instant when Posthumus violently strikes Imogen to the ground only to be invited back into her loving arms a scant few lines later. Douglas Bruster suggests that "By playing upon a received body of conventions, *Cymbeline* foregrounds the audience's ideology, and through the dynamic of shared laughter and outrage lays bare an anatomy of common assumptions . . . when the blow is struck, a world of illusion—one which parody has helped to perpetuate—is shattered."[79] Bruster highlights here the sociocultural matrix from which *Cymbeline* emerged as well as the ways in which the play represents and critiques the culture that serves as its catalyst and touchstone.

Posthumus thinks he is striking an impudent page and not his royal wife. Early modern religious reform addressed marital conduct, and spousal abuse became less and less acceptable as the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries wore on. Although it was certainly not commendable for a husband to beat his wife in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, wife abuse was not subject to complete condemnation, either.[80] The husband was the monarch of the household kingdom, an institutional paradigm that Imogen and Posthumus violate from the outset of the play given his unknown social status and her position as heir to the British throne. Even though Imogen has been usurped from this position in the last act by the discovery of Guiderius and Arviragus, she still outclasses her husband. Thus, this one textual moment interrogates several layers of the class/gender system. Is it only shocking that Posthumus has unwittingly delivered a blow to his wife? Is it not also problematic that he feels free to strike a supposed social inferior in his headstrong rage?

Perhaps the taboo against striking the fairy bride entered popular culture in the illusory fairy world because such abuse was not as socially unacceptable in the everyday world as it might have been for the well-being of Britain's women. Perhaps the construction of a narrative tradition that rendered domestic violence against fairy women taboo constituted an implicit social criticism of domestic violence against real, mortal women. As the fairy bride often forgives the

transgressions of her flawed, mortal spouse and returns to him, Imogen gets up from Posthumus's blow and invites him into her arms. This invitation also constitutes a textual crux, since Imogen delivers the ambiguous lines "Why did you throw your wedded lady from you? / Think that you are upon a rock, and now throw me again" (V.v.264–65). As the fairy brides respond to blows from their husbands with various reprisals, Imogen castigates Posthumus for the abuse and determines what will happen next in the relationship. As Helena does in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, she chooses to pursue the relationship, though it is an open question whether or not her choice is a wise one. As the husbands in the fairy bride tradition must, Posthumus has to place his marital relationship in jeopardy on three levels before he understands the importance of treasuring it: he mistrusts his wife's loyalty, surrendering the diamond token of their union to an enemy; he makes arrangements for her murder; and, finally, he physically strikes her.

This scene is rendered doubly complex by virtue of the fact that Imogen remains in her boy-page disguise. Unlike most early modern dramas that include cross-dressed heroines, *Cymbeline* concludes with Imogen restored—in both the abstract and concrete senses—to her husband while still wearing the attire of a boy. As Simonds observes, "The matrimonial embrace is also visually unusual, since Imogen is still dressed as the boy Fidele. What we see on the stage is the rather shocking spectacle, for the early seventeenth century, of two young men (or at least of a man and a boy) passionately hugging one another, a sight Shakespeare was careful to avoid in his earlier plays." Simonds reads this as Shakespeare's depiction of the importance of equal partnership between the man and the woman in a marital union. She asserts that "the sight of two men embracing onstage would normally suggest to a Renaissance audience not marriage but *friendship*."[81] The embrace of Posthumus and an Imogen still attired as a boy can, thus, be read as an emblem of the companionate marriage. Although many critics who find Imogen an uninspiring heroine are vexed at her delight in the fact that she is on more equal footing with her spouse once her brothers (who supersede her by sex regardless of their age) resurface, she is right to revel in the fact that she and her husband have established more equality and possibility for reciprocity in their relationship by the play's final act.[82]

Conclusion

Katherine Briggs makes the audacious claim that in *Cymbeline*'s pagan Britain "the fairies take the place of God."[83] The story of

Cymbeline had been given a fairy-inflected treatment at least once before, in the *Book of Briton Moniments* in Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The important aspect of Cymbeline's reign in both fairy poem and fairy play seems to be the popular belief that Christ was born during this time. The fairy elements in *Cymbeline* thus serve as developmental links in a theological chain stretching from Roman antiquity, to medieval pastoral piety, to early modern Christianity. Yet Cymbeline initially refuses to pay tribute to Rome. While this political decision was a received historical fact from the pre-Christian era at the time of Shakespeare's writing, the theatrical rendering of a British monarch's refusing to pay tribute to Rome doubtless had topical force in early modern Britain, where defiance of the Roman church was a relatively recent and ongoing phenomenon.[84] As I have noted in the preceding chapters, fairy lore ultimately became bound up in religious controversy, with Protestants in particular associating fairy ritual with the paganism they located in the pretension of the Catholic Mass.

Carefully circling the prickly question of what, exactly, constitutes the dramatic genre ''romance,'' Stanley Wells notes that ''Romancers delight in the marvellous; quite often this involves the supernatural.'' He adds that ''Romance is associated with all that brings man nearer to Ariel than to Caliban.''[85] Romance is allied with that which brings a human closer to a fairy than a monster, a spirit of the air rather than the child of the devil and his dam. In *The Tempest*, the tender sprite Ariel has to teach his mortal master Prospero to forgo the patriarchal priorities of vengeance and domination. The utterly unsocialized Miranda feels free to pursue her attraction to Ferdinand, blissfully unaware that her behavior's social impropriety is doubled by his status as man and prisoner. Thus, romance is also what brings man closer to his ''woman's part'' and woman closer to her inner man.

Juliet Dusinberre has it only half right when she asserts that ''Disguise makes a woman not a man but a more developed woman.''[86] In *Cymbeline*, even when disguise is adopted in name only (i.e., when Belarius, Arvirgaus, or the presumptive boy, Fidele, takes on the role of ''huswife'' or when Cymbeline proclaims himself a ''mother''), it also makes a man not a woman, but a more developed man. A number of critics contend that the male characters have simply appropriated female characteristics by the end of the play in a virtual testosterone fest, which constitutes an elision rather than a celebration of the feminine.[87] But, in fact, the central characters in the play have had to play multiple class and gender roles over the course of the plot, and all of them have been changed by the experience. In particular, Imogen and Posthumus must both come to terms with

their masculine and feminine aspects, respectively; with the lifestyle of the peasantry; with what it means to be foreign, the "other." Though many respond with righteous indignation to Imogen's willingness to forgive Posthumus for losing faith in her and ordering her death, her willingness to forgive him sets an important precedent for the ritual forgiveness of the play's final scene. As Marilyn Williamson notes: "It has been the 'woman's part' to forgive, just as Imogen forgives both Iachimo and Posthumus: so the forgiveness by Posthumus and Cymbeline signals their acceptance of female values, which are identified with nature and Cymbeline's natural family. . . . Moreover, reconciliation with Imogen seems necessary for males to reach significant female elements within themselves and to be generous and giving: she is a catalyst to the process."[88] If forgiveness is established as a feminine attribute, then it is significant that both Posthumus (who forgives Iachimo) and Cymbeline (who pardons and releases the Roman prisoner of war Caius Lucius) must accept this "woman's part" of themselves in order to effect a successful resolution to the play's action.

Sprites such as Ariel enabled the early modern Britons who listened to stories about them as well as those who saw them portrayed in theatrical entertainments imaginatively to enter a space void of strict gender-assigned roles and responsibilities; a world in which the lines between nature and art, the artificial and the natural, are blurred; a kingdom in which the queen leads her merry followers in the sort of revels increasingly reviled by the ministers of state-mandated religion. Indeed, Thomas Rist maintains that romance as a genre is steeped in Catholic nostaligia: "the understanding of magical or miraculous activity in the romances runs counter to Protestantism's historical movement towards demystification, and where such magical or miraculous activity is shown to be benevolent, it suggests a re-statement of pre-Protestant (and therefore broadly Catholic) mentality."[89] This problem becomes particularly acute when fairies oversee such action in the play, since they were popularly perceived as the guardians of the "old faith," the faith ushered in, ultimately, under the Roman influence with which Cymbeline grapples in Shakespeare's play, staged during a period when the playwright had watched his own rulers struggle to assert ecclesiastical independence from Rome and its church.

The fact that *Cymbeline* ends with the miraculous return of multiple characters believed to be dead—many of whom have associative connections to fairies, as we have seen—and with a reconciliation with Rome has unavoidable religious significance. As Willy Maley

notes, "The risk of conversion, of becoming Roman, pervades *Cymbeline*."[90] Although the play is often read as celebratory of its Protestant Jacobean monarch in its homage to an ultimately pacific king whose reign would witness the birth of Christ, the play's invocations of fairy belief and relentless and pervasive effeminacy also suggest the Catholic Church, the Whore of Babylon. The skein of religious association in the play threatens always to unwind, revealing that underneath the page-boy disguise and pagan burial rituals, the initial female heir to England's throne just might be the fairy queen, mistress of pagan rituals and guardian of Catholicism's dead.

5
The Fairy Defense

In 1696, moses pitt published an extraordinary biography of a former servant in his childhood home, Ann Jeffries. The events described commence in 1645, when Ann was nineteen years old. One day, while Jeffries was sitting in the garden doing needlework, six persons clothed in green approached her. According to Pitt, at this sight, ''she was so frighted, that she fell into a kind of a Convulsion-fit.'' Her solicitous master and mistress, who were not aware of what precipitated the fit, put her to bed, where she remained in an apparent brain sickness for quite some time, occasionally rousing herself to utter a phrase such as ''*They are just gone out of the Window; do you not see them?*'' By April 1646, Pitt recalls, ''the Extremity of her Sickness, and the long Continuance of her Distemper, had almost perfectly moped her, so that she became even as a Changeling.''[1] As I have explained in the introduction and the preceding chapters, the term changeling had a variety of meanings in addition to the commonly known one of a child switched for a fairy infant. Since Jeffries was scarcely of an age to be the victim of infant switching, Pitt seems to be suggesting that Jeffries had been rendered ''a half-witted person, idiot, imbecile''—yet another of the popular understandings of this term according to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*). Pitt and his family members would not consider Jeffries a half-wit for long.

Repeatedly linking Jeffries to devout Christianity, Pitt notes that she called upon God when in one of her ''fits'' and adds: ''As soon as she recovered a little Strength, she constantly went to Church to pay her Devotions to our great and good God, and to hear his Word read and preached. Her Memory was so well restored to her, that she would repeat more of the Sermons she heard than any other of our family. She took mighty Delight in Devotion, and in hearing the Word of God read and preach'd, altho she her self could not read.''[2] It is at this juncture that the origin of Jeffries's fits and their import become clear to the Pitt family. Pitt recounts how one day his mother decided that there was not enough bread in the house for the laborers and determined to go to the mill herself and order

more wheat ground into flour. Jeffries was still too weak to accompany her, even though the mill "was but a quarter of a mile from our House." However, Mistress Pitt feared leaving the still debilitated Jeffries in the house alone, "for fear she might do her self some Mischief by Fire, or set the House on fire."[3] Her solution was to persuade Jeffries to roam around the orchard and garden until she returned, to which Jeffries finally reluctantly agreed.

On her return walk from the mill, Mistress Pitt slipped and fell, hurting her leg so badly that she could not rise from the road. Eventually a neighbor happened by on horseback and took her home, and the family sent a servant for a physician. Jeffries then appeared, indicating her sorrow that her mistress had hurt her leg, correctly naming the place where the accident occurred, though, according to Pitt, she had not been told it. She then asked that her mistress let her tend the leg and not bother about a physician. Initially, Mistress Pitt refused Jeffries's proffered ministrations, but she relented "for fear of her falling into her Fits, (for at all times we dealt gently, lovingly, and kindly with her, taking great Care by no means to cross or fret her)."[4] Who is the servant here, and who the mistress? Though the Pitts initially held a position of authority over Jeffries, the relationship Pitt describes sounds like the attentions paid a persnickety mistress by a servant fearful of losing her place.

Jeffries healed her mistress's leg by laying hands on it and stroking it. She claimed that she attained her power to heal "by the Blessing of God."[5] When Keith Thomas briefly discusses Jeffries's case, one of the things he mentions is that she was celebrated for her ability to "cure sufferers from broken bones or epilepsy by the mere touch of her hand."[6] Jeffries's ability to heal by laying on of hands suggests a class violation in and of itself, since this was the way in which the monarch was presumed to be able to heal specific ailments, such as scrofula. The monarch, for that matter, was presumed to derive this type of healing power from God, and the New Testament proclaimed Christ's ability to heal in this way as a sign that he was the true Savior. Unlike her saintly counterparts who also healed by touch, Jeffries made it clear almost immediately that she did not, in fact, derive her power directly from God.

When questioned by her mistress about how she knew the details of her fall, Jeffries kept mysteriously asserting that "*half a dozen Persons told her of it.*" Since Mistress Pitt waited in the road alone for quite some time before her rescuer arrived, she knew this could not be so. Eventually, Jeffries revealed that the origin of "this my great Sickness" had been the "Fright and Consternation" associated with her introduction to the fairies, who "continue their Appearance to

me.'' When forced by her mistress back into the garden where the initial encounter with them occurred, Jeffries claimed that the fairies appeared to her again and asked ''if you had put me out of the House against my Will: I told them I was unwilling to come out of the House: Upon this they said, you should not fare the better for it; and thereupon in that Place, and at that time, in a fair Path-way you fell, and hurt your Leg.''[7] If the Pitts handled Jeffries with kid gloves before this incident, one can be sure that they did afterward. Though she became celebrated for her miraculous healing powers and the fact that she never charged her patients, the first wound Jeffries healed was, paradoxically, caused by the same creatures who helped her cure it, in retribution for a ''hurt'' done to her.

Pitt never seems to find this problematic in the least. In fact, he proclaims: ''This Cure of my Mother's Leg, and the Stories she told of these *Fairies*, made such a Noise over all the County of Cornwall, as that it had the same Effect as St. *Paul*'s healing of *Publius*'s Father . . . as related in *Acts* 28.8, 9.'' Word of Jeffries's miraculous healing powers spread from Land's End to London, and ''People of all Distempers, Sicknesses, Sores, and Ages'' arrived seeking her healing touch.[8] In this regard, Jeffries is similar to her Scottish predecessor, Bessie Dunlop, discussed in chapter one, who had dealings with wealthy members of the gentry who would never before have laid eyes on her until her calling card began to be graciously accepted by the fairy queen.

Jeffries basically operated in the employ of the fairies, according to Pitt. Despite the steady stream of invalids who traveled to her for aid, he insists that ''She took no Monies of them, nor any Reward that ever I knew or heard of, yet had she Monies at all times sufficient to supply her Wants. She neither made nor bought any Medicines or Salves that ever I saw or heard of, yet wanted them not as she had Occasion.[9] She forsook eating our Victuals, and was fed by these *Fairies* from that Harvest-time to the next *Christmas*-day.'' Fairy food seems to be the source of Jeffries's powers. Pitt recounts an incident that occurred on the ''Lord's day,'' no less, in which his father asked for Jeffries and was told that she was in her chamber. He went there and sought her but did not see her. Shortly thereafter, Jeffries appeared before the family at the dinner table and said that she had, in fact, been in her room eating her own dinner, compliments of the fairies, when Master Pitt entered looking for her. She heard him call her and watched him look about for her, but she was as invisible to him.[10] Matters have come to a pretty pass when the master of the house is forced to visit his serving maid's chamber if he wishes to speak to her, while she watches him fumble impotently

about in unhelpful silence as she feasts on fairy food. Jeffries's alleged fairy sustenance figures prominently in the narrative of her incarceration under the famed witch hunter John Tregagle, too.

Her problems began when Jeffries cultivated psychic powers to complement her healing abilities and ultimately forayed into religious prophecy. According to a letter in the Clarendon manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, "'shee prayes very much, and bids people keepe ye olde forme of prayer; she sayes the King shall shortly enjoye his owne and bee revenged on his enemyes.'"[11] Once again, disdain for reform religion is tied to fairy affiliation. However, by this time (1640s), the "olde forme of prayer" can no longer be assumed to be Catholicism.[12] Royalist sympathies suggested Episcopal leanings, whereas the Parliamentarians fractured into a kaleidoscope of sectarian beliefs, including strict Puritanism and Presbyterianism. Two years before Jeffries began spouting Royalist prophecy under fairy aegis, a political pamphlet with similar sympathies appeared in London reputedly produced by Robin Goodfellow. Even from behind the shield of deflected fairy anonymity, the author of this pamphlet equivocates just enough to preclude decisive attack by any of the parties to the civil conflict that was building to a bloody crescendo at this time. For instance, in his tempestuous travels through Britain, Robin finds the state of affairs in Bristol "just like the aire of an April morning, it smiled and it rained both at once, some were greedy of peace, and some againe were as eager of war; here some stood for the King, there others for the Parliament, the greater number was for the one side, but the better for the other."[13] The sly Robin takes care not to make it absolutely clear what side "the one" and "the other" might be.

As does Jeffries, the author of this odd little tract betrays sympathy for King Charles I. In Christchurch he encounters the King's unscrupulous hangers-on, "who whispered into his sacred eares all the ill counsells that they had contrived." Among the offenses Robin catalogs are fabricated military successes and equally fallacious accounts of Parliamentary losses. Robin "much wondered that they being so neare unto him the influence of so sacred a Majesty could work no better impression in their soules; and drawing neare unto his chamber he found his Majesty though in these distracted times yet full of native constancy, and tranquillity of mind, and secured better by his innocence then his guard."[14] "Robin" was not the only author using fairy subterfuge to discuss Royalist politics. In 1648, another anonymous document, *The Faerie Leveller: or, King Charles his Leveller Descried and Deciphered in Queene Elizabeths Dayes,* appeared on the London scene. This bizarre little piece of work basically suggests

that Edmund Spenser was not only poet laureate, but a prophet able to foresee the trouble that Charles I would have with Oliver Cromwell. The remarkable claim is that Spenser allegorized King Charles as Arthegall and Oliver Cromwell as the Gyant "Leveller" of *The Fairie Queene* decades before either of the men was so much as a blip on the British political radar screen. Construed as figures from Britain's archaic Arthurian past, the fairies were the perfect icons for reactionary Civil War politics.

Unlike the shy renegades who penned these pamphlets, Jeffries attached her own identity to her healing arts, her religious prophecies, and her political views. And, in due course, she was summoned before the authorities for it. At first, local ministers visited Jeffries and "endeavoured to perswade her they were evil Spirits that resorted to her, and that it was the Delusion of the Devil." Pitt opines that this charge was ridiculous, since Jeffries "did no Hurt, but Good to all that came to her for Cure of their Distempers."[15] However, he concedes that Jeffries herself was troubled by the ministers' suggestions, as well she might be. In 1617, Thomas Cooper, a Lancashire minister, singled out "the good Witches, and . . . their dangerous helpes" in the "Epistle Dedicatorie" to *The Mystery of Witchcraft*. Over the course of the text, he devotes far more page space to the evils of the good witches than to the wickedness of the bad ones (an entire section—section IV—of the first book). Cooper sees the good and bad witches working as a sort of demonic duo—the latter "may execute her malice upon the bodies of unbeleevers, and so send them to the *Blesser* for the further destruction of their soules."[16] James I expressed a similar view in the *Daemonologie*, asserting, "I say and proue by diuerse arguments, that Witches can, by the power of their Master, cure or cast on diseases."[17] Such a position held potential dangers for Jeffries, and, as I shall argue, for Shakespeare's dramatic cunning-woman creation Helena of *All's Well That Ends Well*. Even though both women are very insistent that their powers derive from God, many writers on witchcraft strenuously argue that practitioners of even white magic are allied with the devil and will mislead true believers into the way of the Prince of Darkness from whom their power "really" derives. Moreover, although Jeffries's case dates from the midseventeenth century, numerous sixteenth-century witchcraft depositions survive in which both male and female cunning folk attribute their arcane knowledge to fairies rather than demons.[18] I have elected to set Jeffries's story off against that of Helena of *All's Well* because it is sufficiently widely known to exist in numerous narrative accounts and because the specifics of the "fairy defense" did not

change much from Shakespeare's age to that of Jeffries, although, as well shall see, their political import had.

After Jeffries's initial meeting with the local ministers, the fairies called to her as she sat with the Pitt family at a fire in their Great Hall. At the family's urging, she twice resisted their summons, but she relented and went to them on their third call. When she rejoined the family later, she carried a Bible and announced that the fairies asked: "What, has there been some *Magistrates* and *Ministers* with you, and disswaded you from coming any more to us, saying we are evil Spirits, and that it was all the Delusion of the Devil? Pray desire them to read that Place of Scripture in the 1*st* Epistle of St. *John, chap.* 4. *ver.* 1. *Dearly Beloved, believe not every Spirit, but try the Spirits, whether they are of God,* &c. This Place of Scripture was turn'd down to in the said Bible. (I told your Lordship before, *Ann* could not read)."[19] This same text appears on the title page of Reginald Scot's diatribe against witchcraft belief, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft.* Scot boldly launched one of the first English defenses of those accused of witchcraft, reasoning that belief in such practice was blasphemous in itself, and that it was certainly an act against God to execute people for supposedly practicing a diabolical art that did not really exist.

Scot was not very successful in winning his point, and Jeffries was not either, at first. Immediately after his account of this incident, Pitt introduces to the story Jeffries's nemesis, John Tregagle, "then a Justice of the Peace in *Cornwall*" and a renowned persecutor of reputed witches.[20] Politically, Tregagle stood in diametrical opposition to Jeffries and her pack of Royalist fairies. Tregagle acted as an informant for the Puritan cause in 1642 and, by 1643, when the balance had briefly tilted in favor of the Royalists, he felt the full force of the King's displeasure with him. Needless to say, a scant two years later he would hardly be amused by a housemaid with inexplicable healing powers who spouted sedition attributed to fairy advisers. Letters written at the time about the Jeffries case report " 'She is under custody and hath been long concealed, lest her discourses wch [*sic*] are all on behalfe of the King (and strangely saucy against the Parliament) should trouble the people's mindes, who are apt to revolt against the Parliaments obedience' ." As B. C. Spooner, author of a brief life of Tregagle, notes, "the true charge preferred against Anne was sedition—sedition in willing ears."[21] Intriguingly, Pitt makes no reference to Jeffries's political prognostications. Fifty years after the fact, doing so would likely have amounted to little more than needlessly tearing open painful political wounds.

Politically subversive though Jeffries's actions might have been in her own day, Diane Purkiss notes how, even then, news of her fairy

miracles made Jeffries's name a household word from market town to manor house: "Eventually, the elite get to hear of Jeffries. Some are intrigued: Hyde, later Earl of Clarendon, wrote eagerly 'I pray as soon as may be send me . . . some more of the prophetess of Bodmin.' "[22] The Hyde in question is Edward Hyde, a committed Royalist. Hyde's letters, all aflutter with eagerness to hear more fairy-inspired prophecy from the lips of the Pitts's serving maid, point to the connection increasingly forged over the course of the seventeenth century between fairies and Royalist politics. As do so many who want their future read, Hyde, apparently, hoped that the fairy fortunes Jeffries had to tell would be favorable to him and to his cause.

Terrified at the prospect of facing Tregagle, Jeffries asked the fairies whether she should run away, but they assured her that she had nothing to fear. Tregagle incarcerated Jeffries in Bodmin jail and "ordered the Prison Keeper that she should be kept without Victuals; and she was so kept; and yet she liv'd, and that without complaining." Pitt and his mother were called before the Sessions to testify on Jeffries's behalf. He recalls that their first two questions concerned the contents of his pockets and whether he had not any food for Jeffries? He insisted that he had not and was dismissed. "But poor *Ann* lay in Goal [*sic*—gaol] for a considerable time after; and also Justice *Tregagle*, who was her great Persecutor, kept her in his House some times as a Prisoner, and that without Victuals."[23] As Spooner notes, "The 'miraculous' about Anne, such as her fasting, gave weight to her words. For it was a credulous time [. . .] in withholding food from her and so forcing her to admit her fallibility on that point Tregagle would have proved it on others, such as her prophecies—her words would have lost their weight."[24] Jeffries remained Tregagle's prisoner for some time and, once released, was ordered to move out of the Pitts's house. An aunt of Pitt's, "Mrs. *Francis Tom*, a Widow, near *Padstow*," subsequently took her in.[25] Tregagle may have won the battle, but Jeffries won the war. She did not eat, she did not therefore undermine public faith in her prophecies or their origin, and she did not succumb to a witchcraft accusation.[26]

On the first page of his introductory epistle to Dr. Edward Fowler, Lord Bishop of Gloucester, Pitt recalls how, the preceding Christmas, Fowler "would not let me go, till I had promised you to publish to the world this following Narrative of and concerning Ann Jefferies, which I had told you about 15 or 20 years ago." Jeffries's fairy interactions were, in the volatile 1640s, sufficient to get her "*questioned before Justices, and at the Sessions, and in Prison, and also before the Judges at the Assizes.*"[27] Some half-century later, Pitt has the Bishop of

Gloucester pulling him by the sleeve, begging him to publish the story "to the world." It was a quite different world in 1696—so much so that an Anglican bishop apparently felt Britain, at least, to be strong enough in its politics and in its faith to face the fairies.

The Wind-up for the Wrap-up

In 1566, the anonymous author of *The Examination of John Walsh* (an unfortunate man condemned for practicing witchcraft despite his protestations that he consorted with fairies and not familiar spirits) concludes his introductory epistle, addressed "to the Christian reader," with a reference to a nameless woman "which used Witchcraft and Sorcerye, that she learned the same of a priest, whose harlot she had bene many a yeare."[28] Significantly, the author of the Walsh account finds it necessary to mention the female whore and witch apprentice to a priest in introducing an account of male witchcraft. From the outset, the writer of the Walsh account links fairy-endowed healing abilities to witchcraft and sorcery, witchcraft and sorcery to priests and "papistry," and, bringing it all full circle, the so-called fairies and what they have to teach to priests and papistry. The central link in this complex associative chain is the fact that Walsh raises the creatures he construes to be fairies by using a book of his master, a priest, just as his counterpart in this account, the nameless harlot, learns her craft from a priest.[29] As I have discussed in the introduction and in chapter one, the language of whoredom and demonism commonly swirls around sixteenth- and seventeenth-century discussions of spiritual practices constructed as blasphemous and, necessarily by this point in Britain's complex politicoreligious history, seditious.

One of the key players in the construction of this mutually damning relation was King James I, who wrote with equal righteous indignation against fairies, demons, and their aficionados, the witches, in his *Daemonologie*. Scotland adopted a zero tolerance policy with respect to witchcraft practice from the outset. The Scottish witch law of 1563 commanded death for any and all practitioners of witchcraft, white or black, as well as for those who consulted witches of whatever stripe.[30] Given James's prominent role in the popular construction of witch beliefs, as well as his central position in the British court for which Shakespeare likely wrote the play that serves as the subject of this chapter, *All's Well That Ends Well*, Scottish witchcraft cases involving fairies, such as that of Bessie Dunlop, have a likely relevance to the play's sociocultural context. James found the persistence of demon and fairy beliefs to be dangerous to the sovereignty of the Protestant faith and motivation for all manner of seditious

behavior. In the portion of the *Daemonologie* assigned to fairy belief, for instance, James has the inquisitive naïf whose questions drive the text's ''dialogue,'' Philomathes, ask, ''I would know now whether these kindes of spirites [fairies] may only appeare to Witches, or if they may also appeare to anie other.'' James's textual persona, Epistemon, replies: ''They may do to both, to the innocent sort, either to affraie them, or to seeme to be a better sorte of folkes nor vncleane spirites are, and to the Witches, to be a cullour of safetie for them, that ignorant Magistrates may not punish them for it.''[31]

These two brief passages contain the seeds of all of the issues I wish to raise in concluding this project. Religiopolitical controversies and sociocultural conflicts over class and gender roles and the behavior appropriate to them were played out in popular lore about fairies from the days of the strapping Joan of Arc, of whom ''the doctors demanded, for the first question, 'If she had knowledge of those who went to the sabbath with the *fays*?' ''[32] through the British Civil War period, when Ann Jeffries transformed herself from orphaned serving maid to healer of her social betters and political prognosticator to the Royalists with fairy aid. Witchcraft is blasphemous not only because it is demonic, in the estimation of the author of the Walsh account, but because it is Catholic. James completes this composite of early modern religiopolitical opinion in voicing the concern that real witches will conceal their demonic doings with spiritual subterfuge, hiding behind a fairy facade.[33] This final concern is the crux of the matter, as the numerous early modern court cases involving people charged with witchcraft who make mention of fairy contact evince. In the early years of Christian religious reform (midsixteenth century), fairy beliefs were still sufficiently pervasive to warrant legal vigilance. In surviving witchcraft depositions from this period (mostly Scottish) such beliefs appear woven into the fabric of the demonic witchcraft narrative. As time wore on, fairy belief became less and less plausible to officers of the church and court and, as a consequence, more and more distinct from the demonic forces still feared to be fighting the clerics for spiritual control of the British Isles and northeastern Europe. By the seventeenth-century, Britons such as Ann Jeffries who professed only contact with fairies were acquitted of criminal charges, whereas the fairy faithful of earlier eras had paid with their life.

The existing legal record makes it clear that consorting with fairies was a crime against neither church nor state both in what it says and what it does not say. *Witch* was the term applied in both hysterical religious tracts and legal proceedings to those who damned their soul with demonic compacts. There was no term for someone like

Ann Jeffries, ''fed for six Months by a small sort of Airy People call'd Fairies,'' who helped her perform ''Strange and wonderful Cures [. . .] with Salves and Medicines she received from them.''[34] No term ever developed to describe such a person and such behavior because there was no crime associated exclusively with fairy commerce in early modern England.

Sir Walter Scott discusses the legal distinction between supernatural practices that derive from fairies and those that have their origin in demonic practice in *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft* (1830):

> A confession of direct communication and league with Satan, though the accused were too frequently compelled by torture to admit and avow such horrors, might, the poor wretches hoped, be avoided by the avowal of a less disgusting intercourse with sublunary spirits, a race which might be described by negatives, being neither angels, devils nor the souls of deceased men; nor would it, they might flatter themselves, be considered as any criminal alliance, that they held communion with a race not properly hostile to man, and willing, on certain conditions, to be useful and friendly to him. Such an intercourse was certainly far short of the witch's renouncing her salvation, delivering herself personally to the devil, and at once ensuring condemnation in this world, together with the like doom in the next.[35]

He is being hyperbolic in claiming that the fairy defense ''became the common apology of those who attempted to cure diseases, to tell fortunes, to revenge injuries or to engage in traffic with the invisible world, for the purpose of satisfying their own wishes, curiosity, or revenge, or those of others.''[36] The point remains, however, that consort with fairies was distinguished from and not legally considered synonymous with a league with Satan.

The trajectory of fairy belief went something like this: in the early years of religious reform in England (midsixteenth century until the 1580s), fairy beliefs were not juridically differentiated from devil worship and witchcraft practice. By the time of the earliest fairy plays (1580s), fairy beliefs had been distinguished from the capital crime of witchcraft, though they were still associated with it. As was the saint worship to which it was linked by reform Christians, fairy belief was marked as other—placed outside the bounds of exemplary conduct for devout Protestants—but distinguished from the powerful negative force of witchcraft practice, if but tenuously. However, as Michael MacDonald notes: ''Magical beliefs were strong and enduring. People continued to believe in demonology and witchcraft and in countermagic during the seventeenth century in part because these ideas and practices were socially functional. They helped vul-

nerable men and women to cope with the terrifying mysterious forces that threatened their health and sanity. [. . .] Indeed, the distinctions between magic, religion, and science, which were increasingly important for the educated elite, had little meaning for the majority of English villagers.''[37] The witchcraft trials of the late sixteenth-century that involve fairies make one point clear: for a court to find an accused person guilty of this capital crime, demons, familiar spirits of a potentially demonic nature, and/or a coven of practicing witches was required. By the Civil War period the legal distinction between fairy belief and witchcraft practice had widened and become sharper, enabling Ann Jeffries, who professed only to have associated with fairies, to be acquitted of all criminal charges.

The Case of ''Dr. She''

I will conclude this project as I began it, with the ''Problem of Helena''—not, however, the Helena of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, discussed in chapter one, but the Helena of *All's Well That Ends Well*.[38] Helena is such a problematic heroine that she has rendered the play that she inhabits a problem, too—*All's Well* is, famously, regarded by many scholars as one of Shakespeare's ''problem comedies.'' As with the other heroines and the other plays that I have discussed, Helena and her socially aberrant behavior snap into a focus that has heretofore eluded most critical responses to her when she is regarded through the lens of early modern fairy belief. Taking a route almost as circuitous as Helena's pilgrimage to Spain from France via Italy, I will first point out the evidence amply offered in the play that its heroine is a witch. Rather than making a case for the play as a sympathetic portrait of white witchcraft, however, I will then draw out the aspects of Shakespeare's characterization of Helena that would have been recognizable to his audience as derived from fairy lore, thus placing her behavior in a less immediately disreputable context.[39] In order to make this distinction clearer, I will contrast *All's Well* with *The Faithful Shepherdess* (circa 1620), a play by Shakespeare's sometime collaborator John Fletcher. This later play features a heroine, Clorin, who is similar in a number of ways to the Helena of *All's Well* but who inhabits a play that repeatedly and directly invokes the popular fairy beliefs that undergird her narrative. In several crucial ways, *The Faithful Shepherdess* renders explicit ideological connections between female conduct and popular beliefs about fairies that remain implicit in *All's Well*.

All's Well begins in the court of Rossillion in France, where the

Count has just died, following his celebrated physician to the grave. Helena, the daughter of this deceased court physician, has been taken under the Countess of Rossillion's wing and has transferred her grief over her father's death to despair of ever winning the love of Bertram, the Countess's only son and the heir to Rossillion. Bertram is placed under the guardianship of the King of France until he attains his majority and so leaves for Paris. Helena boldly reveals her class-crossed love to the Countess, receives her moral support, and follows Bertram to Paris, prepared to try to win his love by saving his new guardian, who is dying of an illness no physician has been able to heal. After brokering a cure-for-a-husband deal with the King, Helena miraculously heals him and claims Bertram as her spouse-prize. Discussing Morgan La Fée, Maureen Duffy observes: "The behaviour of the young lady shows us that she is a fairy woman since they always made the first advances" (60). And, in Helena's case, the second and the third. Enraged that his guardian would disparage him with marriage to a physician's daughter, Bertram runs off to the Italian wars without even consummating the union, swearing never to live as Helena's husband until she can get his family ring from his finger and produce a child whom he fathered. Undaunted, Helena disguises herself as a religious pilgrim, follows Bertram to Florence, and, through the theatrical plot device of the bed trick, fulfills both of these seemingly impossible tasks. Highlighting her versatility as well as her impressive power throughout this narrative, David McCandless provocatively describes Helena as a "shape-shifting superwoman" (453).[40] This potentially positions Helena as the apex of that triad we have encountered repeatedly: unruly woman, actor, and fairy, all of whom appear on the early modern stage and in the popular imagination as shape shifters.

Shakespeare's depiction of Helena implicitly relies on both traditional beliefs about fairies and their subtle reinforcement in the court's consistent refusal to criminalize claims of human contact with the spirits. Her miraculous ability to heal the King recalls both popular lore about fairies' skill at healing and cases such as Jeffries's in which uneducated members of the working classes were called in under suspicion of witchcraft for healing their social betters. Without question, Helena is an unruly woman, but the only character in the play to regard her as such is her forced husband; all of the other sympathetic characters in the play browbeat him for his lack of discernment.[41] Thus, this play directly authorizes female behavior in defiance of social convention in the same way—and using many of the same narrative points—that fairy lore did. Finally, as with the other plays I have discussed, the fairy lore undercurrents in *All's Well*

shift the tide of its religious references, albeit in ambiguous ways. As one who oscillates between conceiving of her beloved as a pagan love object and making a penitential pilgrimage to the shrine of a Catholic saint after driving her resistant spouse to the wars, Helena has a story that is deeply imbued with religious import.

By the midseventeenth century, Britain had weathered several fairly dramatic shifts in state-imposed religious belief and practice, which had produced quite a mishmash of religious cultures and traditions. Christopher Marsh contends that "popular culture absorbed the new without necessarily abandoning the old, and without necessarily resolving the resultant contradictions. . . . the English population gradually accepted a Reformation for which the overwhelming majority of them had not asked. In a sense, they came to think of themselves as being thoroughly Protestant precisely because they were often allowed, in reality, not to be."[42] Fairy beliefs were one of the remnants of popular culture under Catholicism that were absorbed into the citizens' day to day experience of their endlessly metamorphic practice of reform(ing) Christianity. The increasingly tolerant legal response to fairy testimony in the courts and the increasingly common invocation of fairy belief in popular and political literature over the course of the seventeenth century help chart the complex process of religiopolitical attitude adjustment required of those who lived, worked, and prayed in this period of religious reform. The triad of offenses ultimately not considered criminal in Jeffries's case—illegitimate healing practices, politicoreligious prophecy, and fairy belief—figure prominently in *All's Well That Ends Well*, with a similar outcome.

"Traduced with Odious Ballads"

All's Well That Ends Well opens with its heroine, Helena, in the land of the dead.[43] Both her father and the Count (Bertram's father) have died and the French King, who has been named Bertram's guardian, is feared to be dying. Helena eventually replaces the King in this trinity of death when she cures him and then fakes her own death.[44] Her "return from the dead" to the grace of a new life with her newly won husband in the play's final act parallels spiritual entry into a state of grace from the limbo of purgatory, the soul state associated in the early modern consciousness with fairies. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, this movement from death into life also has links to the fairy bride tradition. Fairy women who forged marital unions with mortal men would return to fairyland and a spir-

itual reality unfettered from mortal physicality if their husband failed to observe the stipulations governing their magical relationship. Conversely, mortal women abducted by the fairies were often believed to be dead and occasionally shocked their prematurely remarried spouse with their unlooked-for return.[45]

Much as the orphaned Helena in *All's Well* is thrown on the good graces of her deceased father's mistress, the Countess of Rossillion, Ann Jeffries was a charity case. Raising class issues from the very outset of his tale as Shakespeare does from the opening scene of his play, Pitt explains that "It's the Custom in our County of *Cornwall*, for the most substantial People of each Parish to take [as] Apprentices the Poor's Children, and to breed them up till they attain 21 Years of Age, and for their Service to give them Meat, Drink, and Clothes."[46] This concern recurs in the 1588 case of Alisoun Peirsoun, who also claimed to have acquired knowledge of healing arts from the fairies. Peirsoun makes the intriguing claim at the outset of her testimony that "scho had freindis in that court quilk wes of hir awin blude, quha had gude acquentance of the Quene of Elphane, quhilk mycht haif helpit her."[47] This has two possible meanings, both of which are provocative. She could mean to profess to have friends in the court that is prosecuting her to whom she is related and who also have consorted with the Queen of Elfame. This would render them public hypocrites for prosecuting her for the same offense and refusing to come to her aid. Alternately, she could mean that she has friends in the court of Elfame who are of her own blood—which would render her some sort of semimortal—and that these friends have the power to rescue her. Indeed, Sir Walter Scott reads the account in this way, adding that Peirsoun "averred that she had recognised in the Fairy court the celebrated Secretary Lethington and the old Knight of Buccleuch, the one of whom had been the most busy politician, the other one of the most unwearied partisans of Queen Mary, during the reign of that unfortunate queen."[48] All good Protestants may go to heaven, but apparently Christians who practice Catholic-leaning partisan politics go to fairyland.

The complex interplay between healing arts beneficial to the upper classes and the lower-class practitioners of them figures prominently in the plot of *All's Well*. Bertram balks at the idea that he should marry Helena at the King's command because of the context in which he knows her—as a social inferior with whom he was raised because of the generosity of his family. However, Helena assesses her own merits rather differently. From the outset, Helena establishes the conditions governing her relationship to Bertram. She per-

suades the Countess to let her follow him to Paris, defying social prejudice against both her gender and her social position by offering her medical services to the King. Though she will later be hailed as the mortal agent of a miracle cure, Helena is far more sanguine about her own abilities both to cure the King and to secure Bertram when she lays these interlocked plots. ''Our remedies oft in ourselves do lie, / which we ascribe to heaven'' (I.i.216), she says, after her fateful conversation with Parolles on the sexual politics of losing her virginity ''to her own liking'' (I.i.151–52). When Helena describes her plan to follow Bertram to Paris and attempt to heal his guardian, the King, mortally ill with a mysterious illness, the Countess goes directly to the class and gender issues that problematize it. She says:

> But think you, Helen,
> If you should tender your supposèd aid,
> He would receive it? He and his physicians
> Are of a mind: he, that they cannot help him,
> They, that they cannot help. How shall they credit
> A poor unlearnèd virgin, when the schools,
> Emboweled of their doctrine, have left off
> The danger to itself?
>
> (I.iii.233–40)

Citing the skills learned apprentice-fashion from her father, Helena parries this blow and sets her course for France. Ironically, Lafew, the French courtier who champions Helena, turns the attributes that the Countess considered potential roadblocks for Helena—her sex and her lack of formal training—to means of praising her. He tells the King, ''I have spoke / With one that in her sex, her years, profession, / Wisdom, and constancy hath amazed me more / Than I dare blame my weakness'' (II.i.83–86). The Countess did not reckon on clever Helena's ability to turn her youth and sex from liability to asset in a court ruled by aging men.

Once she has convinced the King to accept her help, Helena dictates the outcomes attached to both success and failure. When Bertram flees her for the Italian wars, she pursues him again, arranging the bed trick and specifying not only what roles her accomplices Diana and the Widow will play, but the conditions under which Bertram will rendezvous with ''Diana.'' Diana delivers these conditions to Bertram, but the Widow makes it clear that the plot is laid by Helena: ''Instruct my daughter how she shall persever'' (IV.i.38). In keeping with her mystical persona, one of the stipulations that Helena asks Diana to make in arranging the rendezvous with Bertram is

that the deed take place at the witching hour: ''When midnight comes, knock at my chamber window'' (IV.ii.54). The letters that Helena sends ahead to the King of France in the final scene reveal her to be the puppet-mistress of the dénouement as well. Helena's prophetic promise to the Countess that, in pursuing Bertram, she will be as one who ''riddle-like lives sweetly where she dies'' (I.iii.214) forecasts the role she plays in scripting Diana's riddling testimony before the perplexed King: ''one that's dead is quick'' (V.iii.304).[49] Though not actually dead, Helena stages a dramatic self-resurrection in the last act, resurrecting her marriage to Bertram in the process by demonstrating that she has met his preposterous dual demand that she get his family ring from his finger and become pregnant with a child of his body even as he shuns all contact with her.[50] For her part, the fairy-affiliated Ann Jeffries refused to conform to social standards governing gendered behavior even before she was under fairy tutelage. Pitt recalls Jeffries as ''a Girl of a bold and daring Spirit: She would venture at those Difficulties and Dangers that no Boy would attempt.''[51] As do the fairies with whom she would later form a unique alliance, Jeffries's ''Spirit'' slides out of gender categories, rendering her more bold, daring, and apt for danger than even a boy, and certainly more so than the stereotyped delicate girl. This, too, is a trait that she shares with the bold, assertive Helena, who refuses to accept her lowborn station in life and sets out determinedly to make her own fortune.

As in the other plays I have discussed, standard gender roles are repeatedly reversed in *All's Well*, a reversal by no means limited to the depiction of the play's heroine. The scene opens on a grieving but strong Countess and a grieving but inventive and bold Helena. These powerful women are contrasted with a smarmy, cowardly Parolles; a petulant, immature Bertram; and a weak King defeated by an illness that creates open wounds in the body, rendering him vulnerable to invasion by the illness that is destroying him. If, in fact, his fistula is derived from a venereal disease, the King is given a sexual wound that invokes misogynistic perceptions of female sex organs as gashes. The nature of his illness thus feminizes him, recalling Helena and Parolles's verbal fencing match on the subject of virginity in the long first scene, in which a woman's body is rendered a region far too open to assault from an outside invader. Finally, the very structure of the play feminizes Bertram, since he is not the central character and not even the subject of the narrative, but its object. Helena, on the other hand, is one of the most aggressive women in the Shakespearean canon. She adopts a number of stereotypically masculine roles, from her frank discussion of virginity

with Parolles (a sort of locker-room chat, military style) to her audacious trip to the French court in pursuit of her love object, Bertram, to her adoption of her father's profession in curing the King's fistula.

Another feature shared by *All's Well* and all of the other plays that I have discussed is the invocation of the changeling lore that enjoyed widespread popularity in early modern Britain. Both Helena and Bertram are changeling children, of sorts, when the play opens since neither is living with his or her actual parents: he has been put in wardship to the King and the Countess has agreed to take Helena under her protection. The Countess tells Helena:

> I say I am your mother,
> And put you in the catalogue of those
> That were enwombèd mine. 'Tis often seen
> Adoption strives with nature, and choice breeds
> A native slip to us from foreign seeds.
>
> (I.iii.139–43)

Once her son refuses to live with Helena as his wife because of class snobbery, the Countess makes a still more explicit reference to child switching, telling Helena: "He was my son, / But I do wash his name out of my blood, / And thou art all my child" (III.ii.66–68). Such willy-nilly reassignment of bloodlines is, of course, a physical impossibility and a nightmarish prospect for the patriarchs reigning in a hierarchy perpetuated by positive identification of paternity.[52]

It is on the issue of paternal identity that Helena's actions are most often called into question by literary critics. She becomes a literal changeling, in the sense of "inferior substitute" (*OED*), in her efforts to secure Bertram as her spouse. *All's Well* is one of approximately forty-five extant early modern plays that employ the plot device of the "bed trick."[53] Helena substitutes her reviled self for Bertram's lust object, Diana, in bed and thereby becomes pregnant with his child. The trio of patriarchal deaths that opens the play is thus answered by a matriarchal trinity of rejuvenation in the last act that calls Bertram to account and offers the promise of new life.[54] Moreover, Diana and Helena stand in for one another at several important junctures in the plot. Helena takes Diana's place in the bed dedicated to Bertram's lust, and Diana stands in for Helena for most of the final confrontation with Bertram before the French King's court.

Another of the Jacobean bed trick plays is John Fletcher's *The Faithful Shepherdess*. In this play, Amarillis, a lusty shepherdess, has

her heart set on the shepherd Perigot, who, in turn, faithfully and chastely loves Amoret. Amarillis persuades the Sullen Shepherd (himself a creature of lust) to help her in a pastoral bed trick. Amarillis plans to stage the trick at the well where Perigot and Amoret have agreed to meet and plight troth—a mystical well situated in the side of a hill[55] and, hence, associated with fairies in Perigot's rapturous description of it to Amoret as

> A virtuous well, about whose flowery banks
> The nimble-footed fairies dance their rounds
> By the pale moonshine, dipping oftentimes
> Their stolen children, so to make them free
> From dying flesh and dull mortality. . . .[56]

The reference to fairy changelings in this passage proves prophetic, given the illicit use that Amarillis makes of it. For her part, Amarillis recalls that it is a "holy well," a description that she credits on the grounds that "my grandame that is dead, / Right wise in charms, hath often to me said."[57] Furthermore, Amarillis aligns the well with not only mystical healing herbs, but also with shape shifting—provided that one knows the proper herbs and charms to use, as Amarillis does, compliments of her "grandame." Of course, Amarillis uses her arcane knowledge to transform herself into the appearance of Amoret, taking her place in her woodland rendezvous with Perigot. Thus, in *The Faithful Shepherdess*, the perpetrator of the bed trick is tied directly to witchcraft and its attendant lascivious sexuality. In this, as we shall see, she is diametrically opposed to the chaste healer-heroine, Clorin. In *All's Well*, Shakespeare makes matters considerably more complex by combining all of these attributes—mystical healing, sexual trickery, and bold pursuit of sexual desire—in a single character: Helena.

Frances Dolan notes the ways in which witchcraft lore regarding sexual manipulation of the bewitched was invoked in late Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. She argues: "This interference focuses on men. Whether they seek the witch's assistance or are the victims of her spells, magic works to frustrate and humiliate them and to support women's integrity and self-determination. Many witch plays focus on the coercion of sexual choice—rape and enforced marriage; but while physical, financial, and parental pressures act to constrain women, witches do not. . . . They can interfere with intercourse, but they cannot control love, which is depicted as too deeply rooted in the subject's consciousness to be tampered with."[58] This description of theatrical witchery could serve as a plot summary of

All's Well. Bertram is forced into marriage after his guardian falls under Helena's "spell," he is tricked by her craftiness into consummating their relationship, and she humiliates him before family, friends, and followers in the final scene. Yet, though opinion of Helena varies widely—from gold-digging nymphomaniac[59] to paragon of chastity and virtue—no one in the play considers her a witch.

No one, that is, other than Helena herself. As does Isobel Gowdie, who in 1662 "made an unusually ample confession, taking on herself the guilt of every known form of witchcraft,"[60] at one point exclaiming, "I deserw to be reivin upon iron harrowes, and worse, if it culd be devysit!"[61] Helena borders on the perverse in her detailed description of the ignominy and shame that should precede her brutal, death-dealing punishment if she fails to heal the King. She recommends:

> Tax of impudence,
> A strumpet's boldness, a divulgèd shame
> Traduced by odious ballads; my maiden's name
> Seared otherwise; nay, worse of worst, extended
> With vilest torture let my life be ended.
>
> (II.i.172–76)

Isobel Gowdie was questioned about her copulation with the devil—the presumptive price to be paid for the extraordinary healing abilities she possessed. As we saw in the introduction to chapter one, Bessie Dunlop was publicly condemned and excoriated for her suspect spiritual dealings. Ann Jeffries feared detailing her story lest damning accounts of her be circulated. Lisa Jardine concurs that Helena's oath to the king prior to attempting to heal him aligns her medical knowledge with witchcraft since she suggests the same punishment meted out to witches: the defamation of her maiden name.[62] Though the punishment Helena details suggests that she is aware of the risk she runs of being charged with witchcraft, she succeeds in healing the king and is greeted as a miracle worker from heaven rather than a witch, black or white. Richard Wilson maintains that "the importance of this Shakespearean play, then, is that it is the first in which medicine, previously the mumbo jumbo of a Dr. Caius or Pinch, can claim a positivity to ensure that 'all's well,' and in the hands of the most suspect of healers, the wise woman or female empiric."[63] By the end of the play, all is well for Helena, because of Helena.

"Things Supernatural and Causeless" (II.iii.3)

Helena's extraordinary ability to cure the King of France's life-threatening fistula is celebrated on stage with a lively dancing entrance by the aged king and his nubile savior. Lafew, who likened himself to Pandarus in leaving the king to the private ministrations of "Dr. She," celebrates Helena's healing abilities far more decorously once she proves her mettle, calling them miraculous. This appraisal echoes Helena's own characterization of them to the King, as derived from the grace of God: "Of heaven, not me, make an experiment" (II.i.156). This, after telling him before conducting her mysterious procedure that her father passed the knowledge on to her "as the dearest issue of his practice," which "he bade me store up, as a triple eye" (II.i.108, 110). Perhaps this gestures to divine grace; perhaps it gestures to cabalistic medicine. The triple eye is usually taken to be the eye of philosophical contemplation, a means of access to divine wisdom and grace left impaired by the Fall.[64] Likewise, too, the ambiguity of Helena's cryptic assurance to the dubious Countess that "there's something in it more than my father's skill" (I.iii.240–41) when justifying her daring trip to the French court. Is this "something" of divine origin or the result of "cunning," a suspect category in early modern England? In Jeffries's case the intermediary for her potent healing power is not a similarly gifted father, heavenly, ghostly, or otherwise, but "six Persons of a small Stature, all clothed in green, which she call'd *Fairies.*"[65] Comfortable though he may be telling Jeffries's story, Pitt notes in his introductory epistle to the Bishop of Gloucester that Jeffries refused to discuss it with him as an aging woman because, "*you would make either Books or Ballads of it: And she said, That she would not have her Name spread about the Country in Books or Ballads of such things*" (9). This is very like Helena, who offers up her name for opprobrium in striking her husband-for-a-cure bargain with the King but who is, apparently, the subject of ballads of wonder and praise after she succeeds. Lafew reads out the ballad title, "'A showing of a heavenly effect in an earthly actor'" (II.iii.23–24), immediately before Helena's triumphant entry into the court with the healed King.

What story would such a ballad tell? Would it bear any resemblance to Pitt's account of Jeffries, and her fairy-derived healing arts? As the fairies are, Helena is a moral enigma, but one that is, ultimately, not damnable. She judges the bed trick to be "wicked meaning in a lawful deed / And lawful meaning in a lawful act / Where both not sin, and yet a sinful fact" (III.vii.45–47). The ambivalent

moral balance here dovetails with the early modern notion of the fairies as ambivalently coded in terms of their relative "goodness" or "badness." Helena's situational ethics would be quite acceptable in the changeable realm of faery but could, nevertheless, align her in the early modern English mind with fairyland's near neighbor, hell. Robert Burton, who exhibits no tolerance for fairy belief in *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, argues that no good justifies an evil action and attributes "miraculous" cures, such as that Helena performs on the King of France, largely to the devil, who, he asserts, "is an expert Physician." In *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (1617), Thomas Cooper contends that good witches work hard to serve Satan, the source of their powers, "even by hunting after and ensnaring the precious soules of men: And to this purpose she hath no more dangerous snare then this *condition of Faith*, that those who will have helpe or succour at her hands, must beleeve shee can doe them good."[66] Helena saves the King from a sure passage to death and is then driven to feign her own death after her initial foray into healing arts, the female practitioners of which James Guillemeau says "were commonly called *Cunning women*: or else caused themselves to be so called: For women are of this disposition, that they desire to excell men, or at least to seeme to go beyond them. Wherefore it may easily be perceived, that there hath been, some women that haue practized Physicke."[67] Many of these women were called something else in addition to cunning women: witches.

As well as being implicated in the early modern debate over witchcraft, cunning folk (both male and female) were involved in another, related controversy that is explicitly invoked in *All's Well*, that between the traditional, Galenic practice of medicine endorsed by the Royal College of Physicians, and the new, upstart Paracelsian practice. Paracelsians rejected Galenic efforts at balancing the four humours with repeated applications of herbal remedies in favor of "'specific' chemical medicines, simplified, distilled medicaments designed to restore health by acting on the special toxicity of that particular disease."[68] Although the link between the Galenists and herbal medicines might seem to align them with the woodland medical training attributed to fairies, by the seventeenth century the Galenist approach to herbal physic had been entirely codified and commandeered by the Royal College of Physicians, edging out "unlicensed practitioners of many sorts—apothecaries, barber surgeons, common people"—and, I would add, private practitioners trading in "receipts" of the sort that Helena's famous father has bequeathed her (II.i.107).[69]

Moreover, Paracelsus himself believed in the powers of fairies.

The fourth of Paracelsus's *Four Treatises* is "A Book on Nymphs, Sylphs, Pygmies, and Salamanders, and on the Other Spirits," (1566) a group that includes fairies. Paracelsus perceived the cosmos as divided into four elements and maintained that creatures could only exist in that element to which they were suited. For humans it was the air; for spirits it was fire. Some spirits, such as fairies, could inhabit two different elements (a capacity that Paracelsus considered a manifestation of the power of God), their natural element of fire, but also the human element of air. True believer or not, Paracelsus offered no defense for people such as John Walsh, Isobel Gowdie, and Ann Jeffries who learned healing arts from the spirits. As James I did, Paracelsus collapsed the "fire people" (spirits) into witches, asserting that, as witches are, such spirits are often possessed by the devil. This potential poses a spiritual threat to humans, to whom these spirits will appear to be merely fire spirits, and, therefore, their demonic possession (and the danger it poses to any human soul with which they have contact) will be hidden. Finally, true to the misogynistic stereotypes of the sixteenth century, Paracelsus asserts that the fire spirits are mostly female: "There are more women than men in such groups, few men, many women; hence they are after men whenever they have a chance"[70]—all of which brings us back to Helena, and her royally sanctioned manhunt.

In the excited gossip between Lafew and Parolles just before the restored King sweeps into the court bearing healer-Helena on his arm, she and her wondrous success are aligned with the Paracelsians, and the ministrations of those "fellows" (literally) of the Royal College and their ilk, the Galenists, are scoffed at as incompetent. Lafew marvels: "To be relinquish'd of the artists—/ PAROLLES So I say—both of Galen and Paracelsus. / *LAFEW* Of all the learned and authentic Fellows—/ *PAROLLES* Right; so I say" (II.iii.10–13). As in so much of their communication, Lafew's reference to "Fellows" is a gentle correction of Parolles's indiscriminate lumping together of Paracelsians and Galenists, of a piece with his other foolish attempts to seem in the know about matters well beyond his ken.[71] The Galenists were "Fellows"; the Paracelsians were renegades. This characterization leads Stensgaard to conclude that "Helena's triumph over the orthodox physicians would . . . enlist our support for the cause of the honest empiric in his [*sic*] continuing struggle with the College to preserve his freedom to practice"[72]: a freedom successfully fought for, we might recall, when Ann Jeffries took the defensive under a fairy banner.

Alan Macfarlane distinguishes among white witchcraft, the work of "cunning folk" and other early modern "empirics," and diaboli-

cal, black witchcraft. He points out that white witches were often prosecuted, too. The operative logic in such cases seems to have been that any attempt either to supersede or to bypass the way of the Almighty was an offense, even if the motivation was to seek good rather than ill. As Macfarlane goes on to explain, economics was one means used to determine whether one was a black or white witch or a cunning woman. Recall that one of the points that Pitt emphasized about Ann Jeffries's miraculous healing was that she took no money for her pains. Writing about early modern "cunning women," Macfarlane notes: "To a certain extent they worked for money, though their fees were less than those of doctors. Fees were related to the type of activity undertaken and the degree of success. Some cunning folk refused payment. . . . Others left fees to the discretion of their clients. It is also clear that cunning folk sometimes put pressure on their clients, and also that extra payments or presents were made if success attended their efforts."[73] In addition to establishing what her punishment will be if she fails to cure the King, Helena also brokers a quite specific agreement with the King regarding the fee she requires for the act of healing him. Making no secret of her opportunism, she asks, "But if I help, what do you promise me?" (II.i.192). The King invites her to choose her reward and she does so: "Then shalt thou give me with thy kingly hand / What husband in thy power I will command" (II.i.195–96). Unlike Jeffries, Helena wants a tangible reward. She is thus aligned not merely with a mortal favorite of the fairies such as Jeffries, but with the fairies themselves, who frequently sought (or just took) a reward for their efforts on the behalf of mortals. It might also align her with the witches who would exact swift and harsh punishment upon those who denied them the favors that they asked.[74]

Helena's brokering also marks a sharp distinction between Shakespeare's portrayal of a "cunning woman" (in every sense of that term, both modern and early modern) and Fletcher's portrait of the chaste woodland healer, Clorin, in *The Faithful Shepherdess.* Clorin's bower stands over the grave of her deceased love, to whom she has chastely committed herself in a bizarre posthumous union that was clearly neither formally celebrated nor consummated while he lived. In the play's opening scene, Clorin invokes her mother's tales of fairy respect for maiden chastity in expositorily explaining her lifestyle choice:

> my mother told it me,
> And now I do believe it—if I keep
> My virgin flower uncropt, pure, chaste, and fair,

No goblin, wood-god, fairy, elf, or fiend,
Satyr, or other power that haunts these groves,
Shall hurt my body, or by vain illusion
Draw me to wander after idle fires;
Or voices calling me in dead of night,
To make me follow, and so tole me on,
Through mire and standing pools, to find my ruin.[75]

This passage offers an intriguing combination of old wives tales ("my mother told it me"), beliefs about fairies (being pixie-led; the prizing of chastity and the ability to punish its violators), and the use of popular belief to exert control over women (all of this "evidence" adds up to a rationale for remaining a virgin).[76] Clorin uses the deitylike powers that accrue to her as a result of her chaste devotions to grow medicinal herbs seemingly able to cure any ailment, including knife wounds. When, in the play's final scene, the Satyr offers to give Clorin anything that she wants as a reward for her careful ministrations (much needed in this tragicomedy, which is about 99 percent tragedy with a quick, concluding turn into comedic resolution), she refuses. Clorin, guardian of the same woodland healing arts that the fairies were popularly supposed to impart, takes—as the King ingenuously suggests that Helena has, even as he instructs his courtiers in their gigolo roles—virtue as its own reward: "Virtue and she / Is her own dower" (II.iii.143–44).[77]

Part of the problem of Helena is that she is very handsomely rewarded for her pains. As Jeffries wound up her career as a healer by making political pronouncements, Helena through her medical skill passes into a position that has political import, since her principal patient is the King of France and her success in healing him transforms her into the wife of the heir to Rossillion. In essence, she becomes a countess-in-progress. The accounts of how Jeffries made her initial contact with the fairies vary widely in the numerous versions of her story. A quite different version of Jeffries's initial encounter with the fairies from Pitt's appears in Robert Hunt's *Popular Romances of the West of England*, originally published in the nineteenth century when fairies were fancied to be dainty imps who drank dewdrops from rose petals.[78] Taking a cue from Pitt's account, Hunt renders what is in his predecessor's version an implicit class shift for Jeffries after her fairy encounter explicit, reporting that "Anne found herself arrayed in the most highly-decorated clothes. So grand, indeed, did she appear, that she doubted her identity."[79] By all accounts, Jeffries's identity does change after she begins consorting with fairies in ways that directly affect her class status and her

relationship to those who originally held a position of authority over her. In some senses, Jeffries's case proves true early modern fears about the ways in which power imbalances in the home would spread into the larger community and, ultimately, the state. In Pitt's account, Jeffries's role shifts from servant, to carefully tended invalid, to household healer, to household mystic who defiantly continues to consort with the fairies after the family who employ her beg her not to, until, finally, she becomes a vocal participant in the realm's contentious religiopolitical infighting.

Helena, too, is transformed by her position as healer to a King. In her first soliloquy—in which Helena reveals that she mourns not for her father, but for her seemingly hopeless love for Bertram—Helena introduces the class disparity between them, likening him to a star: "He is so above me" (I.i.89). Furthermore, she explicitly identifies her love as ambitious: "Th'ambition in my love thus plagues itself" (I.i.92). However, unlike in other early modern stage representations of the blatantly ambitious, often depicted as either foolish (i.e., the ludicrous Sir Epicure Mammon in *The Alchemist*, discussed in chapter three) or politically subversive (i.e., Richard, Duke of York, in Shakespeare's own *Henry VI* plays), Helena is not castigated for her ambition. This, too, has the aura of fairy authorization since, as Diane Purkiss observes, "for the English, in particular, fairies were part of the growing enterprise culture of Elizabethan England. . . . early modern people sought out fairies and begged them to work their magic, not in the interests of morality or soul uplift, but as a way of getting rich—and the quicker the better."[80]

Idolatrous Fancy

When Bertram leaves for Paris, Helena makes the borderline blasphemous vow "My idolatrous fancy / Must sanctify his relics" (I.i.99–100). This perverse sanctification of a sacrilegious level of devotion to another human being recurs throughout the play. The Countess's faithful steward, Rinaldo, dutifully informs his mistress of Helena's love for Bertram by describing an overheard private confession in which Helena ticks off a virtual laundry list of pagan romantic influences, dismissing each as a possible agent of power over her and the destiny of her love for Bertram. He reports:

> Fortune, she said, was no goddess, that had put
> such difference betwixt their two estates; Love no god,
> that would not extend his might only where qualities

> were level; Dian no queen of virgins, that would suffer her poor knight surprised without rescue in the first assault or ransom afterward.
>
> (I.iii.109–14)

As in so many instances of witchcraft accusations, the evidence against Helena perceived to be damning is reported, tell-tale fashion, by a male member of the household who, presumably, would have some power over her, as the steward typically governed all of the household staff. Moreover, given how the action of the play falls out, it is intriguing that Helena rejects the power of pagan gods and goddesses over her, even as she styles herself a ''knight'' of Diana's. Diana, linked via her status as a pagan goddess to the midnight rituals of witch covens, Moon worship, and the witch-goddess, Hecate, would be a suspect figure to whom to pledge fealty.[81] Even more interesting is the fact that Helena's assumption that Diana would not abandon even the poorest of her knights proves quite true. The literal, Florentine virgin queen, conveniently named Diana, does not suffer Helena's indignities in silence but offers both rescue in the first assault (the bed trick) and ransom afterward (her testimony before the King of France).

Helena links her love for Bertram to idolatrous religion once again in her own confession to the Countess, a parodic homage to the Catholic sacrament, officiated by a woman. She ranks her love for Bertram second only to that she bears ''high heaven'' (I.iii.190) and explains, ''Thus, Indian-like, / Religious in mine error, I adore / The sun, that looks upon his worshipper / But knows of him no more'' (I.iii.201–04).[82] In *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Burton waxes both racist and anti-Catholic in a discussion of nature-linked spirits such as fairies that bears a suggestive similarity to Helena's semiconfession, semicastigation. He writes: ''These kind of Devils much delighted in sacrifices (saith Porphyry), held all the world in awe, and had several names, idols, sacrifices, in Rome, Greece, Egypt, and at this day tyrannize over, and deceive, those Ethnicks, and Indians, being adored and worshipped for Gods. For the Gentile Gods were Devils . . . and are *now as much respected by our Papists* (saith Pictorius) *under the name of Saints.*''[83] Saints, Indians, false gods, and—by implication—fairies are everywhere present in Helena's parting letter to the Countess. She identifies her love for Bertram as a pseudopagan misdirection of a passion that, in her view, only the Christian God merits. Her avowed awareness of this sacrilegious infidelity does not prevent her from regarding Bertram as another god, however. Ultimately, she goes so far as to feign a religious pilgrimage devoted to

the "proper" God when her false god, Bertram, is the real object.[84] Once again, Rinaldo serves as Helena's mouthpiece, reading lines from Helena's letter reporting her intended pilgrimage that instruct the Countess to "bless him at home in peace, whilst I from far / His name with zealous fervor sanctify" (III.iv.10–11). Helena likens herself to a saint in her sonnet-letter to the Countess, even as she admits and excoriates her own ambition: "Ambitious love hath in me so offended / That barefoot plod I the cold ground upon, / With sainted vows my faults to have amended" (III.iv.5–7). The object of her pilgrimage is the church of Santiago de Compostela, which Willem Schrickx identifies as "a place in the northwest of Spain, after Rome the second most important centre of pilgrimage, where an incessant stream of devout catholics [*sic*] went to pay homage at the saint's shrine."[85] As David Palmer adds: "This not only gives a specifically religious intention to Helena's flight, not mentioned in her soliloquy, but to Protestant ears it is one that smacks of the superstitious practices of the old faith. Pilgrimages of penitence were undertaken to venerate the shrine of a saint and pray for his intercession for the forgiveness of sins."[86] The intercession of the saints was a theological absurdity on par with fairy superstition in the view of early modern advocates of religious reform. Reginald Scot wonders, "Where are the soules that made such mone for trentals, whereby to be eased of the paines in purgatorie? Are they all gone into *Italie,* bicause masses are growne so deere here in *England?*"[87] If so, Helena puts herself in a position to find them there, or, perhaps, even to join them, since she fakes her own death and then orchestrates the report of it in a manner seemingly calculated to deepen the royal admiration of her.

Bertram proves his own mettle as an idolator of love, although his prayers are not addressed to Helena. Instead, Bertram courts the Italian peasant Diana as the goddess to whom her name links her. He refers to her as "Titled goddess" and begs her to reconsider her cold rebuffs: "Be not so holy-cruel. Love is holy" (IV.ii.2, 32). Bertram may construe his love as holy, but when called upon by the King in the last scene to describe Bertram's relationship to Diana, Parolles offers the odd assessment: "He was mad for her, and talked of Satan and of Limbo and of Furies and I know not what" (V.iii.262–63). All of these things have associations with the pagan worship that Diana's name evokes. As do many other writers, Robert R. Reed Jr. observes that "Christian bias—long before the eleventh century—had demoted Diana, together with the other Greco-Roman gods and goddesses, to the status of a demon; hence, her name had become linked with the idea of enmity toward Christian

doctrine.''[88] The very name *Diana* conjured up a complex set of associations by the early seventeenth century, from a huntress in the pagan pantheon of gods to the witchy Hecate. Thus, although neither of the young heroines of *All's Well* suffers the ill consequences of the comparison, both of them have many links to witch-women such as Bessie Dunlop, treated to public condemnation and immolation rather than public commendation and matrimony.

The Fairy Midwife

All of which brings us to the quartet of women at the center of the play's action: Helena, the Countess, Diana, and the Widow. Ultimately, all four of them are tied together by sexuality: Helena and the Countess because they conspire to secure Bertram as her spouse, and Helena, Diana, and the Widow because she employs their services in orchestrating the bed trick necessary for meeting Bertram's challenging two marital conditions. Besides witches and fairies, there was another early modern cultural figure associated with matters of sex and its legitimacy: the midwife. Indeed, as we shall see, the midwife often not only certified questions of virginity and paternity, but also frequently searched women accused of witchcraft for suspicious physical marks—the teats with which the defendant allegedly fed her familiar spirits—all on behalf of community courts. Thus a heavy irony: a woman such as Helena who practiced healing arts might be called a midwife. Were her powers great enough, she might also be identified as a cunning woman. Should she use her powers in ways deemed suspect or harmful, she might be accused as a witch—an identity often fixed upon her, in turn, by an examination conducted by other women respected as midwives.

As Helena might be identified as a healer-midwife, in many ways, Diana also fulfills this social role in the last act. J. H. Aveling notes that Diana was the patroness of women in childbed, lending additional significance to Shakespeare's use of the chaste goddess of the hunt's name for his chaste stand-in for the more potent huntress, Helena.[89] However, the role of midwife in early modern society was not confined to the birthing chamber. James Guillemeau explains the three offices of midwives in *Child-Birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women*, published in London in 1612: ''The first office was to make the match, and to ioine the husband with the wife, and likewise to iudge, whether they were fit, and capable, or else vnable, and vnsufficient to haue issue, and beget children: which is very difficult to be knowen, and at this day there is no woman so cunning, who is able

to tell it.''[90] Though Helena and Bertram are already married before either of them meets Diana, she joins them paradoxically, by pretending to be the wedge driving them further apart. Bertram consummates his marriage to Helena under the delusion that he is sleeping with Diana. The poor virgin Diana's chastity is preserved, but at the (temporary) expense of the commodity that Helena herself used to strike her initial bargain with the King, her ''maiden name.'' The second midwives' office Guillemeau discusses is the most familiar one, of being present and assisting at the delivery of children. The third office was ''to know and tell whether a woman was with child, or no''[91]—a part that Diana plays with arch pleasure: ''Dead though she be, she feels her young one kick. / So there's my riddle: one that's dead is quick'' (V.iii.303–04).

In addition to reiterating the points that Guillemeau makes, Elizabeth Harvey notes that ''Female midwives, in addition to their crucial practical functions, occupied a significant symbolic role, since it was they who . . . certified a child's legitimacy, and, as witnesses, ensured that one child was not substituted for another, that still-born children were properly baptized and disposed of, and could testify that if a child died it had perished of natural causes.''[92] In other words, given the staunch popular commitment to changeling lore that offered a fairy excuse for missing children, midwives were in a position to keep fairy secrets.[93] The midwives' oath, which was on the statute book from 1553 to 1786, included the promise to '' 'faithfully and diligently exercise the said office according to such cunning and knowledge as God hath given me' ''.[94] The oath, administered by early modern bishops, also required would-be midwives to swear: '' 'I will not permit or suffer that any woman being in labour or travail shall name any other to be the father of her child, than only he who is right and true father thereof; and that I will not suffer any other body's child to be set, brought, or laid before any woman delivered of child in the place of her natural child, so far forth as I can know and understand' ''.[95]

Such an infant switch is depicted in Peter Hausted's play *The Rival Friends*. Placenta the midwife reveals that she has orchestrated a double infant switch, of sorts, helping one woman cover the embarrassment of having falsely thought herself pregnant by accepting the deformed birth of a second woman, who, in turn, gives out that her pregnancy proved abortive.[96] Were this not to turn out a rather happy accident in the play, Placenta would likely have found herself in deep trouble. A key claim in much changeling lore is, of course, that the midwife and the gossips attending on the birth do not see

the fairy-for-infant switch take place. The midwives' oath thus leaves a convenient loophole for a fairy defense all its own.

Early modern fairy belief had a place for midwives, too. In a tale told in almost as many permutations as the basic changeling story, a mortal woman was summoned by a man who—unbeknown to her—was a fairy, to tend on his wife in childbed. After helping the woman give birth, the midwife was instructed to anoint the infant's eyes with a salve that she inadvertently put in her own eyes. Alternately, it either made her see a home she had taken for a hovel as a gilded and glimmering fairy palace or rendered what seemed a castle nothing more than a dirty hole in the ground.[97] According to Katherine Briggs, the woman in childbed was typically taken to be a mortal woman abducted into fairyland. The grateful fairy father usually gave the midwife a reward, which was often the miraculous cure of an illness in one of her loved ones.[98]

Guillemeau concludes his description of mortal midwife duties by railing on a fourth office that women have taken upon themselves: "authority to judge of the virginity of maids. Neuertheless all the famous Vniuersities of *Italy* haue rejected, and condemned the opinion of such Midwiues, who say they can iudge thereof . . . it is very difficult, yea impossible, to know whether a maide, be a virgin or no; And that this power was neuer giuen vnto Midwiues by the Ciuill Law, to iudge thereof."[99] As I discussed in chapters one and two, fairies—particularly Robin Goodfellow—were renowned for admiring mortal chastity and hating sluttishness.[100] The fairies placed a high premium on virginity and had, presumably, means of identifying it. Helena takes on this final aspect of the midwife role when she appears in the last scene to unravel the web of riddles that Diana has been weaving. Ultimately, Diana the virgin stands surety for Helena's pregnancy just as Helena, herself about to be a mother, stands surety for Diana's virginity.

Diana and Helena perform a bifurcated midwife role in *All's Well*, each assuring the other's chastity and, in Helena's case, certifying pregnancy before the highest of human courts, the monarch's. All of this is necessary because Bertram has snubbed Helena on the basis of her low class status. It is therefore doubly ironic that he courts and promises himself in marriage to an Italian peasant girl whose language he does not even speak, and, in turn, that Helena leans on the status and financial means that her marriage to Bertram grants her in orchestrating the bed trick that will tie him more firmly to her. As she did in proffering her ministrations to the King, though, Helena abjures the material origins of her power, in favor of spiritual ones. Helena repeatedly invokes heaven as the source of

her power before the execution of the bed trick, telling the Widow: "Doubt not but heaven / Hath brought me up to be your daughter's dower, / As it hath fated her to be my motive / And helper to a husband" (IV.iii.18–21).[101] By the time she appears in Florence, Helena has acquired, through marriage to a count under monarchical sanction, sufficient personal and financial clout that she need not rely on the tenuous status that inheres in a chaste maiden's name or the supposed spiritual benefits that accrue to preserving it. Diana, on the other hand, has only her chastity to bargain with, and her mother is the one who sells that to the highest bidder.

To be more precise, the Widow loans Diana's maiden name to Helena, since Diana gets it back in the last scene, along with an interest payment in the form of the handsome dowry that Helena has bestowed upon her and, ironically, the same "deal" from the King that Helena was originally offered: "Choose thou thy husband, and I'll pay thy dower" (V.iii.328). Ending back where he started, the King is apparently prepared to commodify another of his wards to maintain the economy of monarchical munificence.

Since the male prerogative is a given in patriarchal societies, Shakespeare's critique of the hegemonic marital order in *All's Well* is rendered doubly devastating by virtue of the fact that he shows the spousal sale played out in its "worst" permutation: on the body of a male of noble rank rather than upon the standard frame of a woman—particularly one of low rank.

As Carolyn Asp notes, Diana's riddling ring game in the final act is "a triangular transaction between women in the possession of a man. In this circuit of desire Diana remains aloof, Helena gets what she wants and Bertram gets what he does not know he does not want. Without cognitive power, Bertram assumes the role of a circulatable commodity; again, he is 'feminized.'"[102] This is a role into which Bertram tries to force Diana, loudly asserting that she is "impudent. . . . And was a common gamester to the camp" (V.iii.187–88). Ultimately, it is Bertram who is publicly punished for sexual infidelities he never even managed to commit, and not the lower-class woman who would typically be the object of public condemnation and scorn. Throughout *All's Well* Shakespeare underscores the bankruptcy of society's gender-based and gender-biased rules and roles by showing how treatment typically reserved for women affects a male member of the nobility. One of the reasons that the conclusion of the play produces such a sense of unease, however, is that a simple inversion of oppressive social norms is not an adequate response, either. It is just as unfair to treat a male member of the rul-

ing class as chattel as it is to treat a female servant or foreign peasant in that way.[103]

Conclusion

A. P. Rossiter observes that the last scene of *All's Well* is a trial scene.[104] Diana stands accused of being a whore, and Bertram of being a murderer. Helena's miraculous healing powers, bed trickery, and return from supposed limbo would have defended her in the eyes of an early modern audience familiar with the fairy lore links for these actions and become the defense of them all.[105] Certainly no one in the play calls Helena a fairy, and I am not prepared to do precisely that, either. However, I would suggest that critics have been frustrated in their attempts to link Helena with Shakespeare's other comedic heroines because they have failed to explore fully the fairy lore threads that run through all of their stories. One of their most significant links is the fairy link. As I have demonstrated in the discussion of another ''trial scene,'' that of Ann Jeffries, ultimately the fairy defense reconciled the popular sympathy for illiterate serving women possessing the power to restore physical and spiritual health with their potential for politically and religiously subversive sedition. Though the road that led there was often rocky, all did end well in the public arena for uppity women with ties to those elusive, ambiguous, intensely secretive spirits the fairies.

THE

HISTORY

OF

Queen *MAB.*

OLD CHAUCER doth of TOPAS tell,
Mad RABLAIS of PANTAGRUEL,
A later third of DOWSABEL,
With ſuch poor trifles playing:
Others the like have labour'd at,
Some of this thing, and ſome of that,
And many of they know not what,
But that they muſt be ſaying.

Another ſort there be, that will
Be talking of the FAIRIES ſtill,
Nor never can they have their fill,
As they were wedded to them:
No tales of them their thirſt can ſlake,
So much delight therein they take,
And ſome ſtrange thing they fain would make,
Knew they the way to do them.

A Then

Michael Drayton, *The History of Queen Mab; or The Court of Fairy* (London, 1751), sig. A1, recto. The first page of the text reproduces the image from the title page. (Provided with the kind permission of the British Library, shelfmark BL1465.d.5.)

Conclusion

Another sort there bee, that will
Be talking of the Fayries still,
Nor neuer can they have their fill,
As they were wedded to them;
No Tales of them their thirst can slake,
So much delight therein they take.

As I have worked on this project, fairies have experienced something of a popular resurgence. I have had fairy calendars hanging over my computer for the last six years and have received a wide array of fairy gifts, from pewter bookshelf guardians to bookends to earrings. Fairies have appeared on the silver screen several times in the past five years, too, in films such as the fictive docudrama *A Fairy Tale,* the gorgeous dreamscape *Photographing Fairies*, and a live-action remake of *Peter Pan.*[1] When this project was in its initial stage of development, I sent an E-mail containing my basic ideas to my colleague and dear friend Fran Botkin, who was at the time engaged in archival research in the United Kingdom. She, in turn, described the concept at the dinner table in her residence hall that evening and was astounded when the resident cynic, a British scholar completing his Ph.D. in philosophy, got a faraway look in his eyes and said wistfully, ''I heard the banshee once.''

We may no longer share a widespread belief in creatures who abduct infants, or the identificatory caul or telltale mole that reveals fairy benediction, or supernatural cures for perfectly natural ailments passed on to mortals by fairies favorably disposed to them. And yet, culturally, we still recognize the association between fairies and intractable women. Sprinkler of stardust and speaker of tinkle-talk though she may be, Tinkerbell is still recognizable as a female fairy rebel. She fights along with Peter and the Lost Boys, and she unabashedly pursues the Boy Who Refuses to Grow Up with all the verve of her lusty progenitor, the Fairy Queen. Perhaps the most compelling recent manifestation of the connection that I have traced out here between fairies and unruly women appears in the

dense, magnificent novel *Possession*, by A. S. Byatt.[2] Here, Catherine La Motte engages in a passionate, adulterous affair with Randolph Ash—an affair adulterous for him because he is married, and for her because she is in a long-term lesbian relationship. Byatt's La Motte is a but thinly disguised version of Catherine le Jumel de Berneville, Countess d'Aulnoi by marriage to Francis de la Motte (or "La Mothe"), Counte d'Aulnoi who, according to her memoirs and the preface to one of her many early eighteenth-century collections of fairy tales, led a rather libertine life herself.[3] Throughout, Byatt's La Motte writes of the mystical water fairy, Melusine, a shape-shifting beguiler of hapless men. Melusine emerges in the novel as more than a poetic muse. She is, in many senses, the inspiration for La Motte's rebellious choices to live with a female lover, to take a male lover, to bear his child and then conceal their daughter's existence from him. But of course, in turn, La Motte's own fierce independence is what draws her to Melusine's story and drives her to shape it in the ways that she does. So it was, I maintain, in early modern England.

In the last decade, social historians and literary critics have increasingly replaced the neoclassical label *Renaissance* with *Early Modern* for the period that began in the midsixteenth century in Britain and extended up to the Restoration. This shift recognizes the myriad ways in which so many of the aspects of our own society—capitalist enterprise, urbanization, the bourgeois domestic household—emerged at that time. In writing about Shakespearean history plays, for example, Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin contend that "what is most important about these plays from a feminist standpoint . . . is not primarily the images of women they construct (which are relatively few and often sketchy), but rather the impact the plays have had on the ways we imagine gender and sexual difference, the institution of marriage, and the gulf between 'public' and 'private' life. These are part of the legacy affecting the lives of all women who inhabit the cultures these plays helped to shape."[4] The groundwork was laid for many of the class- and gender-based hierarchical structures within which we still operate and against which materialist feminists still struggle during these years.

This was also a period, though, when women diverted themselves from the drudgery of housework by dreaming up a cast of fairy characters who just might do it for them. It was a time when the desperate mothers of underdeveloped infants rationalized away their babies' failing health by imagining them to be fairy changelings. It was an era in which abused women eased the pain of their physical and psychological wounds by imaginatively escaping to fairyland,

where brides brooked no such assaults and a regal queen reigned supreme. So long as there are oppression, mortality, and gender inequity, there will be a psychic need for fairyland.

Imaginative creations such as fairies are squeezed out at cultural pressure points. Popularly conceived as creatures that intervene into human affairs while those who will ultimately share tales of them are sleeping, fairies are eruptions of the subconscious into the waking world of communal reality. As such, they are keys to a collective psyche, and points of entry into the hopes, fears, and desires of entire societies. What I have tried to offer here, therefore, is less a conclusion than an invitation to join me in exploring the innumerable early modern incarnations of fairyland, the place where the Otherworld meets our world, reflecting it back to us upside down, inside out, and backward. Our habitual ways are not the only viable ways of living and loving. There is much to be discovered in the territories our ancestors called into imaginative being that were then abandoned, unexplored.

Notes

Preface

1. Marjorie Swann precedes me in noting the significance of fairy beliefs to Stuart poetry. Her claim that "fairylore became a particularly apt vehicle for mystifying the profound socioeconomic changes of the early modern period" builds upon premises similar to my own with respect to the poetry of Robert Herrick, Michael Drayton and William Browne. See "The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 449–73.

2. On the conceptual overlap between witch and fairy beliefs, see Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), 3.

3. I had developed this position before I had the opportunity to hear Heather Dubrow address the issue of the gendering of literary genres in her Newberry Seminar talk, "The Masquing of Genres in *Comus*, or What's a Nice Boy like You Doing in a Topos like This?" (lecture, Newberry Library, Chicago, October 16, 1999). I agree with her assessment that literary genres, cultural institutions, and so on, can, indeed, be gendered in the sense that they can be hierarchically ordered in a manner that replicates the alignment of the genders in the larger society. Genres that are assigned "feminine" attributes are rendered subordinate to those given masculine ones. Such considerations, however, require careful attention to details of historical and cultural context.

4. Henderson and Cowan explain " 'experience-centred' " for their purposes as focusing "not on whether a belief is true or untrue, but on the reasons such beliefs are held to be credible." See *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 12.

Introduction

The opening quote is from Eleanor Hull, *Folklore of the British Isles* (London: Methuen, 1928), 21.

1. See *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, in *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington, (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), II.ii.1. All subsequent references to Shakespeare will be taken from this collection. Citations by act, scene, and line number will appear parenthetically in the text.

2. What Marina Warner says of fairy tales is instructive here; she maintains that "the historical interpretation of fairy tales . . . reveals how human behaviour is embedded in material circumstance, in the laws of dowry, land tenure, feudal obedience, domestic hierarchies and marital dispositions, and that when these pass and change, behaviour may change with them." See *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), xxii–xxiii.

3. See Wendy Wall, "Why Does Puck Sweep? Shakespearean Fairies and the Politics of Cleaning," in *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 94–126.

4. See, in particular, Mary Ellen Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 277–312. Lamb's book, *Production of Popular Culture by Shakespeare, Spenser and Jonson* (New York: Routledge, 2005), is devoted to the presence of old wives' tales in the work of these authors. Sadly, it had not yet been published as I completed final revisions to this book.

5. See Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 4. Zipes locates literary fairy tale elements in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, and plays by Shakespeare, including *King Lear*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and *The Tempest*. See *When Dreams Came True: Classical Fairy Tales and Their Tradition* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 11. This list excludes a number of plays, including three that I will discuss: *Merry Wives of Windsor*, *Cymbeline*, and *All's Well That Ends Well*. It also collapses distinctions between popular fairy beliefs and the narrative structures and conventions of fairy tales as a distinct genre.

6. See Samuel Harsenet, *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures, to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties Subjects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils* (London: James Roberts, 1603), 134–35.

7. See Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 610. For an earlier articulation of this formula, see *English Fairy and Folk Tales*, ed. Edwin Sidney Hartland (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., n.d.), xviii.

8. George Chapman, Ben Jonson, and John Marston, "*Eastward, Ho*," in *The Revels Plays*, ed. R. W. Van Fossen (New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), V.i.85.

9. Documents of somewhat dubious provenance found in the rafters of the Shakespeare family home in Stratford suggest that William's father, John, may have been a recusant, or crypto-Catholic. See Stephen Greenblatt, "Shakespeare's Family," General Introduction, *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 43.

10. A sylph is a kind of fairy—specifically, an air spirit.

11. Keith Sagar refers specifically to the punishment that Theseus offers Hermia for refusing to marry Demetrius: "to become a nun." He contends that this barren, unappealing form of spirituality is set off against the vibrant fertility of the play's other sort of spirits, the fairies, who oversee the play's marriages. See "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *Critical Survey* 7, no. 1 (1995): 38–39.

12. Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries (including convents) in 1536 and 1539. See Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22.

13. Caroline Bicks discusses the complex religious associations with Ephesus, where "Saint John and the Virgin Mary (who had lived there by some accounts) are practically eclipsed by the temple's monumental associations with pagan idolatry and Amazonian women." See *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 162 and 185–88.

14. Working through much of this same material, Richard Strier argues, "It is impossible to read *The Comedy of Errors* as anything but totally skeptical about witchcraft, about demonic possession as an account of madness, and about [specifically

Catholic] exorcism.'' See ''Shakespeare and the Skeptics,'' *Religion and Literature* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 175. Stephen Greenblatt finds Shakespeare's invocation of ''witches, sorcerers, fairies, goblins, and the like'' possibly an indication of the playwright's interest in ''the way disoriented or anxious people construct desperate explanatory hypotheses'' rather than ''evidence of full-scale skepticism.'' See *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 158–59. In my discussion of *The Comedy of Errors* as in my discussion of all of Shakespeare's works, my point is not to interrogate the status of his personal beliefs, but to suggest some of the implications that the theatrical presentation of these story lines and characters would have had for his audience.

15. The play was censored because it included several disparaging references to Scots and because it lampooned the Jacobean sale of knighthoods (a practice from which the play's ignominious Sir Petronel has benefited).

16. I was reminded of the hilarious import of this aspect of Sindefy's character by Margot Heinemann, *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts*, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 84–85.

17. Chapman, Jonson, and Marston, ''*Eastward, Ho*,'' V.i.85–101.

18. The original champion of the view that popular tales typically dismissed as escapist fare actually function as social critique, Marina Warner adds that ''One salient aspect of the transmission of fairy tales has not been looked at closely: the female character of the storyteller.'' See *From the Beast*, xvi, xx, 16. Of the persistent connection between fairy beliefs and women Adam Fox writes, ''They [fairy beliefs] were not merely confined to women, of course, but they seem to have had a particular place in female belief and the main characteristics of fairy behaviour by this period were centred on the household and childrearing.'' He goes on to make the significant observation that ''Shakespeare's plays contain a number of allusions to fairy-tales which clearly needed no explanation to contemporary audiences but are only known today through later recordings.'' See *Oral and Literate Culture in England, 1500–1700* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 187, 200.

19. See Diane Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 158.

20. This is the full, descriptive title of the first edition of Robert Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth* (1691; reprint, London: James Ballantyne & Co. for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1815). The title page indicates that the text was prepared in 1691, though there is no extant version of the text from that year. Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan claim that ''The importance of Robert Kirk's work to the understanding of the nature of fairy belief, and other supernatural phenomena, cannot be stressed enough since he greatly enhanced his account by drawing upon a range of informants and tradition-bearers.'' See *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 17, and see also 171–92 for a full discussion of Kirk's life and work, as well as the complex history of this text, the manuscript of which went missing in the nineteenth century. Matthew Woodcock questions the validity of Andrew Lang's 1933 edition of the text on the grounds that ''By the time of Lang's edition the manuscript had been misplaced, leaving some question as to the extent of Lang's editorial emendations.'' See *Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 15 fn. 17. Diane Purkiss also discusses Robert Kirk; see *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 185–86, 207.

21. Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 1–2. When quoting from early modern texts, I have followed the spelling and capitalization conventions of the original text, replacing only the *S* with its modern equivalent.

22. Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth* xii–xiii.

23. Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, folio ed. (London: John Rodker, 1930), 86. Noel Williams provides an explanation for the seemingly incongruous reference to "bugs" in this list of otherwise supernatural beings. In the early modern era, *bug* could mean simply "object of dread" (and could, for instance, be synonymous with *scarecrow*) but it could also have the more specific connotation of "demon." See "The Semantics of the Word *Fairy*: Making Meaning Out of Thin Air," in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991), 461. See also Katherine Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge, 1959), 15.

24. Minor White Latham pioneered the view of Shakespeare's irrevocable impact on fairy lore in *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972). See also G. K. Hunter, "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *Shakespeare: The Late Comedies* (London: Longmans, Green, 1962), 7–20; Dale Blount, "Modifications in Occult Folklore as a Comic Device in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 9 (1984): 1–17; Sagar, Marriage , 34–43; and Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 174.

25. Katharine Briggs, *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 3.

26. Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 3.

27. See, for example, Robert Chambers's account of Isobel Gowdie's case in vol. 2 of *Domestic Annals of Scotland from the Reformation to the Revolution,* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1859), as well as R. Pitcairn's account of the case of Alisoun Pearson in *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1833), vol. 1, part 3. Both of these cases are discussed in Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 102–3 and 112–13.

28. Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 7.

29. See Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden,* 66.

30. The most thorough early survey of the complex interconnections between witchcraft and fairy belief appears in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), but see also Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden,* and *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

31. *Daemonologie*, The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile, no. 94 (1597; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., 1969), 57.

32. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (1621; reprint New York: Tudor, 1941), 166.

33. *Daemonologie,* 74.

34. See Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 7–8, 34. For similar claims, published in the same year, see Richard Baxter, *The Certainty of the Worlds of Spirits. Fully Evinced by Unquestionable Histories of Apparitions and Witchcrafts, Operations and Voices, &c.* (London, 1691), 4.

35. See Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 44. Peter M. Rojcewicz shifts his focus to the other end of the spectrum, distinguishing fairies from angels. He asserts that the latter "generally are more spirit than flesh. Fairies, on the other hand, are more animal and elemental (i.e., of the spirit of the earth, air, fire and water) than angels. Fairies are closer to the everyday concerns of humans than are angels." See "Between One Eye Blink and the Next: Fairies, UFOs, and Problems of Knowledge," in *The Good People*, 482.

36. See Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*; Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (New York: Haskell House, 1968); Katherine Briggs, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); and Jennifer Westwood, *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain* (London: Paladin, 1987), among others.

37. Alison Jones, ''Fairy,'' *Larousse Dictionary of World Folklore* (New York: Larousse, 1996). When the Irish antiquarian Jeremiah Curtin asked one of his informants why fairies were called the good people, he was told, '' 'Some call them the good people to avoid vexing them. I think they are called the good people mostly by pious men and women, who say that they are some of the fallen angels.' '' See Jeremiah Curtin, *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World Collected from Oral Tradition in South-West Munster* (London: David Nutt, 1895), 42.

38. See ''Introduction,'' *Secret Commonwealth,* xxii, and also Lowry Charles Wimberly, *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928).

39. See, for example, David. N. Beaurgard's discussion of the fact that '' *The Thirty-Nine Articles* appended to *The Book of Common Prayer*'' condemned, '' 'The Romish Doctrine concerning Purgatory, Pardons, Worshipping and Adoration, as well of Images as of Relics, and also Invocation of Saints' ''. See '' 'Inspired Merit': Shakespeare's Theology of Grace in *All's Well That Ends Well*,'' *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* 51, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 231–32, as well as Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), an engaging history of the demise of purgatory in Reformation England.

40. See Christopher Clobery, Esq., *Divine Glimpses of a Maiden Muse: Being Various Meditations on Several Subjects* (London: James Cottrell, 1659), 12, 28, and 73. For another instance of this sort of fairy-inflected religious argument, see M. William Guild's suggestively titled *Ignis Fatuus or The Elf-Fire of Purgatorie: Wherein Bellarmine is Confuted by Arguments Both out of the Old and New Testament, and by his own Proofs out of Scriptures and Fathers* (London: Augustine Matthews, 1625).

41. See Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, reprint, 169.

42. See Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England, 1560–1660* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), 98. Peter Marshall also discusses the devolution of Catholicism itself into superstition in the regard of some reform Protestants in *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England*, 96–97.

43. Williams, ''The Semantics of the Word *Fairy*,'' 469 and 471.

44. Briggs's glossary in *The Vanishing People: Fairy Lore and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978) makes elves analogous to fairies, and the Scottish Elfame synonymous with fairyland. See also Maureen Duffy's *The Erotic World of Faery* (London: Hodder, 1972), 35 fn. 18, where she observes that the term *elf* was applied to figures now more popularly identified as fairies as late as 1300.

45. See Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 43; Briggs, *Anatomy of Puck*, appendix.

46. See Rojcewicz, ''Between One Eye Blink and the Next,'' 493; and Richard P. Jenkins, ''Witches and Fairies: Supernatural Aggression and Deviance among the Irish Peasantry,'' in *Good People*, 315. See also Briggs's *Vanishing People*, particularly 78, 97, 99.

47. See, Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth*, 8; Maria Leach, ed., ''Fairy,'' in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972), 363; and Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (New York: Haskell House, 1968), 328.

48. See Briggs, *Fairies in Tradition and Literature*, 87. Diane Purkiss provides a more recent summary of fairy characteristics:

> Fairies come from outside, from outside the community, civilization, even when they seem to share its values.
> Fairies were either once people or are like people who have become trapped at a certain indeterminate phase of life.
> Fairies have links with the dead, and some *are* the dead.
> Young men, women in childbirth, and babies and children are particularly vulnerable to fairies
> . . . . . .
> Fairies have bodies which reflect their anomalousness, subtly or directly.
> Fairies are also particularized to the local situation, as the changing role of nymphs indicates.
> Fairies are common to peasant cultures, cultures where the centre of life is the village and the space around it.

See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 48.

49. See Duffy, *Erotic World of Faery*, 73.

50. Ibid., 62.

51. See Durant Hotham, *The Life of Jacob Behmen* (London, 1654).

52. See Briggs, *Encyclopedia of Fairies*, appendix.

53. See Briggs, *Vanishing People*, 93–98 and Jennifer Westwood's *Albion*, 281–282.

54. See Williams, "Semantics of the Word *Fairy*," 457, 458, and 472.

55. See Duffy, *Erotic World of Faery*, 74–76.

56. See David Young, *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of "A Midsummer Night's Dream"* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 159–60.

57. See Peter G. Platt, *Reason Diminished: Shakespeare and the Marvelous* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 129.

58. See Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal, 1982), 102.

59. Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 4.

60. Latham goes on to assert, "That Robin Goodfellow survived the 16th and 17th centuries without losing his broom or his candlestick, would argue well for the universality and minuteness of the knowledge concerning him, and would furnish ample proof of his folk origin, the recollections of which continued to exist." See Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 245–46 and 248.

61. See Suzanne W. Hull, *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 57.

62. See Katharine Briggs, *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 128.

63. See Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102.

64. See Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 86.

65. Victor Turner and Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan note that *limen* is Latin for "threshold." See Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, 41, and Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 39. Victor Turner and Brian Sutton-Smith mutually formulated the theory that "liminal and liminoid situations" function as "the settings in which new models, symbols, paradigms, etc. arise—as the seedbeds of cultural creativity in fact. These new symbols and constructions then feed back into the 'central' economic and politico-legal domains and arenas, supplying them with goals, aspirations, incentives, structural models and *raisons d'etre*." See Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre* 28.

66. See Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 208.

67. See Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred, "Rites of Passage as Meeting Place: Christianity and Fairylore in Connection with the Unclean Woman and the Unchristened Child," in *Good People*, 216.

68. Susan Amussen concludes *An Ordered Society* by pointing out that authority is a social construct subject to constant change, which must always be accounted for in the complex, necessarily shifting hierarchical power equation. She adds: "In early modern England, several aspects of this equation were changing or being challenged: the economy was transformed by demographic growth and inflation; the political order was explicitly challenged by the gentry who tried to regain control of royal policy and prevent the establishment of what they sometimes perceived as absolutism; the family was changing as women in wealthy families gradually withdrew from work, and as poorer families became increasingly dependent on wages; the social order of villages was challenged by those who sought to introduce new agricultural practices . . . and by those who rejected the power of local notables." See *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 187–88. Theodora Jankowski likewise describes the early modern period as "a shifting and contradictory space"; therefore, she contends, during this time "attitudes toward women were similarly flexible." See *Women in Power in the Early Modern Drama* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 23, 48.

69. See Robert Weimann, *Shakespeare and the Popular Tradition in the Theater: Studies in the Social Dimension of Form and Function* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1987), 193. Fairies enjoyed their greatest popularity in literature from the last quarter of the sixteenth century until the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth. They certainly appeared in literature prior to this time, however. Chaucer's Wife of Bath, for instance, begins her tale by locating it in the days of Arthur, when fairies were free to dance on the village greens.

70. See Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck*, 6–7.

71. See Stuart Clark, "The Rational Witchfinder: Conscience, Demonological Naturalism and Popular Superstitions," in *Science, Culture and Popular Belief in Renaissance Europe* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1991), 233–34.

72. See Frances Dolan's observation that "Some early modern writers connected Catholic women not just to illiteracy and materialism but also to superstition, oral transmission, and the occult. This set of associations, in which old wives' tales and old papists' tales are the same works to discredit Catholicism and relegate it to the past." *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 28.

73. See Reginald Scot, *The Discoverie of Witchcraft*, folio ed. (London: John Rodker, 1930), 86. For an intriguing, converse association of tales of fairies with men, see *The Faithful Shepherdess*, where Amoret bolsters her courage for a late-night sojourn in the woods by saying, "Methinks there are no goblins, and men's talk / That in these woods the nimble fairies walk, / Are fables." See John Fletcher, "*The Faithful Shepherdess*," in *Masterpieces of the English Drama* ed. Felix E. Schelling (Chicago: American Book Company, 1912), III.ii.97–99.

74. Taking wicked pleasure in the potential subversiveness of such behavior, Mary Ellen Lamb speculates, "What better way for a country servant, especially an old woman servant, to gain psychological power over her master's children than to impress them with the powers of magical forces within the household, known to her in a way unavailable to the more educated members of the household?" See Mary Ellen Lamb, "Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Pop-

ular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 282.

75. See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 164.

76. See Lamb, ''Taken by the Fairies,'' 279.

77. See Crawford, *Women and Religion in England*, 100.

78. See Lamb, ''Taken by the Fairies,'' 282.

79. Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988).

80. See Wendy Wall, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 105–6.

81. See Alan Sinfield, *Literature in Protestant England, 1560–1660* (Totowa, NJ: Barnes & Noble Books, 1983), 2.

82. Stephen Wilson concurs that traditional beliefs including magic and the supernatural ''should not be dismissed lightly or treated condescendingly, as they often continue to be even by historians interested in religion and culture at the popular level. Rather they need to be carefully described and understood in the same way as the official and established ceremonies of Church and State.'' See *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Hambledon & London, 2000), xxx.

83. See the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as well as the discussion of the various early modern uses of this term in the introduction to Thomas Middleton and William Rowley, *The Changeling*, Regents Renaissance Drama, ed. George W. Williams (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), xv, and Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 52–60, 121, 156–57, 196, 211.

84. See Peter Hausted, *The Rival Friends, A Comedie*, The English Experience Number 601 (1632; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), sig. A2 verso and sig. D2 recto.

85. Briggs goes on to explain that ''Human milk is much esteemed by the fairies; there seemed to be a notion that it might give fairy babies the chance of a human soul.'' See *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 119–20. As with so much fairy belief, similar behavior is ascribed to witches. So, for example, in William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, Pan is approached under ominous circumstances by the ghost of his recently deceased, mortal love. Before he sees her, he fears lest

> any diuellish Hag were come abroad
> With some kinde Mothers late deliuer'd load,
> A ruthlesse bloody sacrifice to make
> To those infernall Powres, that by the Lake
> Of mighty *Styx* and black *Cocytus* dwell,
> Ayding each Witches Charme and misticke Spell.

See *Britannia's Pastorals*, Scholar's Press Facsimile (London: The Scholar Press Limited, 1969), 100.

86. See Lewis Spence, *The Fairy Tradition in Britain* (New York: Rider, 1948), 234. Spence discusses changeling beliefs, including tests for changelings, at length; see 228–54.

87. See, for example, Leah Marcus's discussion of the fact that ''the Stuart politics of mirth were transmuted when there were no longer Stuarts at Whitehall to sustain it. During and after the Civil War, royalists hermeticized the interdicted pastimes, gave them cryptic forms and sank them into a rural landscape where they could be read as vestiges of the vanished culture, a language of covert opposition.''

The Politics of Mirth: Jonson, Herrick, Milton, Marvell and the Defense of Old Holiday Pastimes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 21. This point will be discussed in greater detail in chapter five.

88. See Susan Schoon Eberly, "Fairies and the Folklore of Disability: Changelings, Hybrids, and the Solitary Fairy," in *Good People*, 233. See also Eleanor Hull, *Folklore of the British Isles* (London: Methuen, 1928), 11, and Maria Leach, ed., "Fairy," in *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend*, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972), 365.

89. See Crawford, *Women and Religion in England*, 56, and Peter Marshall, *Beliefs and the Dead in Reformation England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 203–5.

90. See Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), 57–59.

91. *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 365. In *The Magical Universe*, Stephen Wilson notes the "apotropaic power" of iron, used to give protection against fairies in Scotland. See *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Hambledon & London, 2000), 421, and also Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 96.

92. One definition provided for the term in the *OED* is "A person or thing (surreptitiously) put in exchange for another." This usage dates from the midsixteenth century.

93. Richard P. Jenkins, for instance, notes the "numerous cases reported in the oral tradition of people being taken but returning many years later, to the dismay of their families who believed the individual to be dead and buried years before and had restructured their lives accordingly. There are regular references to wives returning only to find their husbands remarried." See Jenkins, "Witches and Fairies: Supernatural Aggression and Deviance Among the Irish Peasantry," in *Good People*, 317.

94. For an excellent, thorough summary of such lore, see Juliette Wood, "The Fairy Bride Legend in Wales," *Folklore* 103, no. 1 (1992): 56–72.

95. Ibid., 56, emphasis mine.

96. See Briggs, *The Vanishing People*, 145–50; *Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); 135–37, Keightley, *Fairy Mythology*, 370, 409–11; and Regina Buccola, "'As Sweet as Sharp': Helena and the Fairy Bride Tradition" in forthcoming collection on *All's Well* edited by Gary Waller for Routledge.

97. See Wood, "Fairy Bride Legend in Wales," 57, 61.

98. Ibid., 69, and Westwood, *Albion*, 47–48.

99. See Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), 300–302.

100. See Jenkins, "Witches and Fairies: Supernatural Aggression," in *Good People*, 316.

101. See "The Fairy Cup of Kirk Malew, Isle of Man," *Waldron's Works* (Oxon, 1731), 126–27, reprinted in *Tracts on Folklore* (BL shelfmark 12432ccc2), 1–9. There is a letter dated April 30, 1858, in the front of the bound volume, promising also to send "antiques."

102. See Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 148.

103. See *Daemonologie*, 40.

104. See William Warner, *Albion's England* (London, 1612), 367–70, sigs. E4 recto-F1 verso. A previous edition of the first forty-five chapters of this work appeared in 1592, but it does not include this poem. Interestingly enough, one of the British Library copies of the 1612 edition has forged on its title page "William Shakespeare his booke." See British Library shelfmark C.71.c.11.

105. See Robert Herrick, "The Fairie Temple," *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, The Stuart Editions, ed. J. Max Patrick (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 128–30.

Chapter 1. "The Story Shall Be Changed"

1. See R. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1833), 49 fn. 4 and 51. My account relies primarily on the transcription of Bessie Dunlop's testimony in Pitcairn, but see also Alec Derwent Hope, *A Midsummer Eve's Dream: Variations on a Theme by William Dunbar* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), esp. 90–93, and Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief* (East Linton, Scotland: Tuckwell Press, 2001), esp. 84–85. For a complete list and synopsis of the 133 Scottish witchcraft depositions that involve fairy beliefs, see Julian Goodare and others, The Survey of Scottish Witchcraft, University of Edinburgh http://www.arts.ed.ac.uk/witches.

2. In Scottish dialect elves are analogous to fairies, the Scottish Elfame synonymous with fairyland. See Katherine Briggs, *The Vanishing People: Fairy Lore and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), glossary, and also Maureen Duffy's *The Erotic World of Faery* (London: Hodder, 1972), 35 fn. 18, where she observes that, even in England, the term *elf* was applied to figures now more popularly identified as fairies as late as 1300. Diane Purkiss helpfully precedes me in providing a rationale for using Scottish witchcraft testimony about fairies to explore their presence in early modern English drama. See *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 87–88, and "Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen," "*This Double Voice": Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, chap. 5, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 119, fn. 5 (New York: St. Martin's, 2000). See also Emma Wilby, who argues that "fairy beliefs played a more significant role in the creation and promulgation of beliefs concerning the witch's familiar than has been hitherto acknowledged." "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," *Folklore* 111 (2000): 283.

3. That is, "as she was going between her own house and the yard of Monkcastle" when "new risen out of childbed." Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 51.

4. Katharine Briggs, *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 119.

5. Dunlop is asked, "If she never asked him, Wherefore he came to her more than to anyone else?" Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 56.

6. Reid helps Dunlop recall: "When she was lying in child-bed, a stout woman came in to her and sat down beside her and asked a drink of her, which she gave her; who also told her that her newborn child would die, and that her husband would mend of his sickness. The said Bessie answered that she remembered well thereof, and Tom said That was the Queen of Elfame his mistress, who had commanded him to wait upon her and do her good." Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 56–57. Sir Walter Scott commiserates with the reader whose fairy fancies might be stifled at the thought of the Queen of Fairies as "a mere earthly gossip" and "be a little hurt at imagining the elegant Titania in the disguise of a *stout* woman, a heavy burden for a clumsy bench, drinking what Christopher Sly would have called very sufficient small-beer with a peasant's wife." See *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970), emph. orig., 127–28.

7. Pitcairn goes on to note the singularity of this spirit's "use of the most pious

salutations. . . . No doubt these were the common salutations of the Catholics of the Church of Rome of this period, but assuredly not lightly to be pronounced by such questionable characters as Thom.'' See *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 52. Lizanne Henderson and Edward J. Cowan also discuss the nostalgia for Catholicism inherent in Dunlop's testimony in *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 130.

8. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 56. The question posed to Dunlop is ''What she thought of the new law? Answered, That she has spoken with Tom about that matter; but Tom answered, That this new law was not good; and that the old faith should come home again, but not such as it was before.''

9. Ibid., 56 fn. 8.

10. Scott, *Letters*, 127.

11. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 53. Asked ''If she had sought anything from Tom to help herself or any other?'' Dunlop replies, ''That when sundrie persons came to her to seek help . . . Tom gave her, out of his own hand, a thing like the root of a beet and bade her dry it and make powder of it and give it to sick persons and they should mend.''

12. As Diane Purkiss puts it, ''The fairy stories [in Scottish witchcraft testimony] I am going to be discussing are the sounds of silence in two senses. Firstly, they represent a moment when a normally silent group—women of the lower orders—makes an appearance as storytellers on the historical stage. Secondly, they represent the things those women could not ordinarily say.'' See ''Sounds of Silence: Fairies and Incest in Scottish Witchcraft Stories,'' chap. 4, *Languages of Witchcraft: Narrative, Ideology and Meaning in Early Modern Culture*, ed. Susan Clark, 81 (London: Macmillan, 2001).

13. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, 55.

14. As Diane Purkiss notes of Elspeth Reoch's testimony about fairy fraternization, ''Elspeth's encounters occur at the two most common life moments for such encounters: the threshold of womanhood and the aftermath of childbirth.'' See ''Sounds of Silence,'' 87.

15. Diane Purkiss compellingly asks of Titania's beautiful speech about her deceased Indian votaress: ''what if Bessie Dunlop were to tell this story? What if this *is* Bessie's story, as seen by the queen of the fairies?'' See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 178. Purkiss discusses *A Midsummer Night's Dream* on pages 166–82.

16. *A Midsummer Night's Dream* was published in quarto in 1600, but it is listed in Francis Meres's *Palladis Tamia*, which was published in 1598, so the play was presumably written in the mid- to late 1590s. Floris Delattre argues that, in this era, ''Just as most of the play-goers, the most thoroughly educated as well as the most ignorant, believed, when they saw the ghost of Hamlet's father striding across the stage, that such things would happen, thus the fairies of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream* even leaving aside their unparalleled, literary qualities, must have struck Shakespeare's contemporaries as well-known and, in fact, all but natural beings.'' *English Fairy Poetry from the Origins to the Seventeenth Century* (London: Henri Frowde, 1912), 127.

17. For example, the *Standard Dictionary of Folklore* asserts that fairyland ''is ruled over by a king and queen, but generally the queen is dominant.'' See *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend*, ed. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984), 363. Sir Walter Scott notes of the fairies that ''their government was always represented as monarchical. A King, *more frequently* a Queen of Fairies, was acknowledged; and sometimes both held their court together.'' *Letters*, emph. added, 105. See also Pitcairn's discussion of the court testimony offered by Isobel Gowdie, who professed to have met the Queen of

Fairies; Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), 14; and Emma Wilby, ''The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland,'' *Folklore* 111 (2000): 283–305. As the seventeenth century wore on, it became more common to focus on the king of fairies in literature; however, this seems to be the result of the shift to a male ruler (James I) and of the fact that men had begun fully to appropriate the traditional beliefs for their own creative purposes. For examples of a dominant fairy king, see Robert Greene (?), *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, The Malone Society Reprints, ed. W. W. Greg (1598; reprint Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), *A Description of the King and Queene of Fayries, their habit, fare their abode, pompe, and state* (London: Richard Harper, 1635), and Thomas Randolph, *Amyntas or the Impossible Dowry, A Pastoral Acted before the King and Queen at White-hall* (London, 1638), published in *The Poems and Amyntas of Thomas Randolph*, ed. John Jay Parry (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1917). Note that, with the exception of Greene's play, all of these examples date from the Jacobean era.

18. Speaking of Scottish witchcraft testimony regarding fairies, specifically, Diane Purkiss notes that ''These stories not only undo our assumption that fairies are small gauzy-wingy thingies; they also undo the assumptions about the true nature of femininity which tend to accompany the gauzy-wingy beings.'' See ''Sounds of Silence,'' 95.

19. See Dale Blount's ''Modifications in Occult Folklore as a Comic Device in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Fifteenth-Century Studies* 9 (1984): 1–17; G. K. Hunter, ''A Midsummer Night's Dream,'' *Shakespeare: The Late Comedies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1962), 7–20; Keith Sagar's ''*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Marriage of Heaven and Hell,'' *Critical Survey* 7, no. 1 (1995): 34–43; and Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 176–218.

20. *Something of Great Constancy: The Art of ''A Midsummer Night's Dream''* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1966), 29.

21. ''But We Are Spirits of Another Sort': The Dark Side of Love and Magic in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'' in *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Siefried Wenzel, 84 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978). Jan Kott makes a related argument about the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, though he renders them evil incarnate, rather than a complex synthesis of good and evil. See ''Titania and the Ass's Head,'' *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, trans. by Boleslaw Taborski, preface by Peter Brook (1965; reprint, New York: Norton, 1974), 207–28; and also Winfried Schleiner, ''Imaginative Sources for Shakespeare's Puck,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (1985): 65–68; David Young, *Something of Great Constancy*, 26–29 and David Marshall, ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 543–75.

22. All textual references to *A Midsummer Night's Dream* will refer to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed. ed. David Bevington, 147–77 (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992).

23. Stephen Greenblatt discusses the questionable spiritual nature of the fairies with respect to their association with the dead specifically in *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 162–64.

24. *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 69.

25. ''The Moon and the Fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *University of Toronto Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (April 1955): 234.

26. *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 220–21. G. K. Hunter also acknowledges Puck's outsider status in the fairy world: ''Shakespeare has indicated the difference between his fairies and the traditional spirits by having one of the latter as a member of his fairy court. . . . Puck supplies the element of mischief and even malice which is lacking in Shakespeare's other fairies.'' ''A Midsummer Night's Dream,'' *Shakespeare: The Late Comedies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1962), 16. Such an attitude toward Puck fails to acknowledge that although an outsider to fairyland, Puck is doing the bidding of its king, Oberon. One can only see Puck as the sole element of mischief in the play if one fails to see Oberon as malicious in his attitude toward and treatment of Titania.

27. Bevington also notes the manner in which Puck demonstrates his capacity for malicious mischief. See '' 'But We Are Spirits of Another Sort' '' 80–92.

28. ''Titania and the Ass's Head,'' *Shakespeare, Our Contemporary*, trans. by Boleslaw Taborski, preface by Peter Brook, (1965; reprint, New York: Norton, 1974), 218. Dorothea Kehler notes that ''Kott now believes that *Dream* is susceptible to *light* as well as dark interpretations.'' See ''*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Bibliographic Survey of the Criticism,'' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler, 15 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

29. William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (London, 1600), BL shelfmark C.34.K.30. See sig. B3 verso, sig. B4 recto, sig. D3 recto, and sig. F2 verso. The Newberry Library also owns a copy of the 1600 quarto, shelfmark Case 3A 894. The signatures of the two texts correspond in these passages.

30. Keith Sagar asserts, ''Hermia says that she does not know 'by what power' she is made bold to refuse. The rest of the play defines that power and sets it up in opposition to the sterile and arbitrary legal power which governs Athens.'' ''*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Marriage of Heaven and Hell,'' *Critical Survey* 7, no. 1 (1995): 38. In a powerful formulation of the role that the women play in *Dream*, Christy Desmet asserts: ''First, the women of *Dream* usurp masculine rhetoric by speaking in the public sphere, disfiguring the patriarchal fictions that order erotic and social relationships in Shakespearean Athens. Second, they reconfigure that social rhetoric by offering alternative tropes for new ideals of love.'' See ''Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes: A Rhetorical Reading of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler, 309 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

31. Marshall asserts that ''plays that end in marriage are not necessarily comedies . . . Is it asking too much of an antique fable and a fairy toy to be skeptical about the 'gentle concord' created by the sudden reconciliation and rearrangement of the lovers at the end of play?'' ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 547.

32. As R. W. Dent observes, ''The eventual pairings, then, are determined by Oberon, although always with the recognition that the heroines' choices are in some mysterious way right, that the pairings, to be 'true loves,' must correspond with their wishes.'' See ''Imagination in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler, 90–91 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

33. As for the fairies generally, whom Latham describes as committed to chastity, Robin Goodfellow would assist no ''sluttish'' maids; ''nor would he lend his aid to men or women unless they conformed to his standard of morality in regard to love. If they were true lovers, he took a tremendous interest in their affairs, in which he meddled, until he brought about a happy consummation. So well known were his

match-making instincts and his devotion to the cause of true love that his endeavors in this regard were recognized as one of his functions.'' *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972), 249.

34. Jean Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, Feminist Readings of Shakespeare (New York: Routledge, 1997), 36.

35. ''Disfiguring Women with Masculine Tropes,'' 300.

36. David Marshall, ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 557.

37. Peter Holland reads this passage as ''comic rather than genuinely dangerous.'' See ''Theseus' Shadows in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Shakespeare Survey* 47 (1994): 148. However, it is likely that an early modern audience would have at least entertained the possibility that Helena is in legitimate danger, particularly given Robin Goodfellow's role in her woodland sojourn. In *A Pleasant Comedie Called Wily Begvilde* (1606), for example, Robin oversees a whole variety of sexual indiscretions including a trumped-up rape charge and is credited with the ability to predict ''how many Maides would be with childe in the / towne all the yeare after.'' He also professes the ability to ''Effect such wonders in the world / That babes wil curse me, that are yet vnborne. / And honest women rob of their good name.'' Finally, in lines well suited to his shenanigans with the four lovers in MND, Robin asserts, ''But the chiefe course of all my life, / Is to set discord betwixt man and wife.'' See The Malone Society Reprints, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), scene xv, lns. 1906–7, and scene xvi, lns. 2054–56 and 2061–62.

38. Rajiva Verma notes that ''The liminal phase in seasonal group rites usually takes the form of a period of saturnalian misrule or carnival in which all social relations are turned topsy turvy.'' See *Myth, Ritual, and Shakespeare: A Study of Critical Theory and Practice* (New Delhi: Spantech Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., 1990), 80–81. Verma's identification of the period of misrule as a liminal phase underscores the way in which the fairies, as overseers of the woodland period of misrule that ultimately leads to the play's comedic conclusion, are liminal figures. It is significant that Helena—a woman—introduces the notion of inversion; as François Laroque puts it, ''In the upside-down world of the forest and under the influence of Oberon's night-rule everything works backwards. . . . Midsummer misrule has turned into the rule of mis(s)!'' See ''Ovidian Transformations and Folk Festivities in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and *As You Like It*,'' *Cahiers Elisabethains* 25 (April 1984): 24.

39. As alluded to in the heading of this section, David Marshall claims that ''the problem of Helena'' lies in the fact that ''she often seems to embody the opposites of the qualities shared by the other women in the play: defiance, self-respect, independence, dignity. Could it be to emphasize by contrast the paths that Hippolyta, Titania, and Hermia have not taken? . . .'' ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 558. This casts Helena as the antifeminist foil against whom this trio of feminists in the rough shine the brighter. I find that Helena stands in a more complex relation to the other women characters than this, however, as my succeeding points will make clear.

40. ''Titania and the Ass's Head,'' 216.

41. Dash notes that though ''Seldom the subject for criticism, Helena has the largest percentage of lines (10.4) and words (11.2) of any woman character in the play although Hermia has more speeches (9.5 percent to Helena's 7.14).'' *Women's Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 262 fn. 20. Lisa J. Moore, who portrayed Helena in 1994 at the Playhouse Theater in Seat-

tle, adds, ''Helena is the only one of the Lovers who soliloquizes.'' See ''Transposing Helena to Form and Dignity,'' in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler, 463 Garland Reference Library of the Humanities (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

42. Though he offers some suggestions for why this may not be an accurate assessment, Noel Williams notes, ''Etymologies for *fairy* have generally been derived from words denoting female supernatural creatures in other languages. Thus it has been derived from the Latin *nympha*, and from Arabic *peri*.'' See ''The Semantics of the Word *Fairy*: Making Meaning Out of Thin Air,'' in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez, 462 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991). This argues for a feminine inflection to the term *fairy* regardless of the gender assigned to the sprites by name. Helena's association with the fairies is reinforced later in the play when Demetrius awakes and his love-juice-streaked eyes light on Helena; one of the first epithets he applies to her is ''nymph.'' He says, ''O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!'' (III.ii.137).

43. ''Sounds of Silence,'' 94.

44. See chapters two and three for a full discussion of the fairy queens in *Merry Wives* and *The Alchemist*.

45. Diane Purkiss observes that ''The queen of the fairies is itself a rewriting of a range of stories, probably women's stories or old wives' tales, which survive only in fragmentary form, but which gesture at women's investment in the idea of a powerful and eroticized matriarchy which is not an object of desire but a possible fantasy self.'' See ''Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen,'' ''*This Double Voice'': Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, chap. 5, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 104 (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

46. As Wendy Wall puts it, ''Fairylore becomes a channel through which Shakespearean drama grapples with the class-specific practices that subtend debates about English community in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.'' See *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 95.

47. See ''Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen,'' ''*This Double Voice,*'' 110 and 116–17.

48. See the introductory material in *Rewriting the Renaissance: The Discourses of Sexual Difference in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Margaret W. Ferguson, Maureen Quilligan, and Nancy J. Vickers (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), xv–xxxi.

49. *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 151.

50. Irene Dash describes the ass-loving Titania as ''the strongest and seemingly freest woman character in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: Titania, the fairy queen, who so delights us at her first entrance and later raises questions about women's roles. Is she the victim of male power, male irrationality, trickery, or jealousy? Is she merely a fairy? Or does she illuminate the feelings and attitudes of women reacting to dominating male behavior?'' *Women's Worlds in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1997), 83.

51. One could well question the wisdom of Helena's choice of Demetrius since he consistently conducts himself as an abusive ass until he is drugged. However, such considerations are beyond the scope of the present discussion. The point is that regardless of Helena's prudence (or lack thereof), she gets the man that she wants by the final curtain.

52. ''Taken by the Fairies: Fairy Practices and the Production of Popular Culture in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51, no. 3 (Autumn 2000): 309.

53. ''Strategies of State and Political Plays: *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Henry IV*, *Henry V*, *Henry VIII*,'' in *Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism*, 2nd ed. ed. Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield, 111 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

54. *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 85, emph. mine.

55. Kate Chedzgoy discusses the fact that the changeling is not represented in the play in *Shakespeare's Queer Children: Sexual Politics and Contemporary Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995). Stevie Davies also notes the conspicuous absence of the changeling boy, but she places any thought of him in act V with the *reading* audience, rather than any of the characters on the stage. See *The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 128.

56. Marshall notes ''The changeling comes to represent all of the characters in the play who are traded or fought over as property . . . the other characters are changelings in the sense that the play's plot revolves around their exchanges: their substitutions and their interchangeability. . . . The changeling boy is mysteriously absent in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but in a sense he is everywhere; the play casts its characters as changelings.'' ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 568–69.

57. According to the *OED*, as early as 1555 the term could be applied to ''a fickle or inconstant person'' or any ''person or thing (surreptitiously) put in exchange for another'' and not just a fairy-switched infant. Since it is the men who are inconstant in *MND* whereas women are stereotypically associated with flightiness, this suggests yet one more of the play's reversals of popularly conceived gender roles.

58. ''A Midsummer Night's Dream,'' *Shakespeare: The Late Comedies* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., 1962), 9.

59. Flabbergasted by the implications of the fairy intervention into human love affairs, David Marshall wonders: ''How are we to take Demetrius' recovery from the 'sickness' of abandoning Helena and loving Hermia since it is just as much the product of enchantment as Lysander's abandonment of Hermia and love for Helena? Are we to be pleased by the success of Helena's subjection of herself to Demetrius or Titania's sudden and manipulated surrender to Oberon?'' See ''Exchanging Visions: Reading *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,'' *Journal of English Literary History* 49 (1982): 548. These are excellent questions that suggest numerous ways to approach the central plot points from a woman-focused perspective.

60. Scott Cutler Shershow links the etymological root of puppet, *pupa*, to the term *nymph* and notes the feminine inflection of both terms:

> The original Latin word *pupa* has also been adopted unchanged into English as a biological term for the intermediate stage in the life cycle of certain insects: the ''chrysalis'' or ''nymph'' between the caterpillar and the butterfly. *Nymph* and *nympha* are also recorded in the seventeenth century as scientific (and occasionally poetic) terms for the labia minora. . . . The pervasive, overdetermined etymological link between the performing object and the female body suggests that conventional philosophic and scientific vision of the latter, consolidated in authoritative medical texts from Aristotle to Galen to the scholastics and beyond, as an inverted, imperfect, or incomplete version of the male body, a puppet-like vessel providing passive material for the active masculine form.

See *Puppets and ''Popular'' Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 70. Suggesting the questionable spiritual stature of fairies, at the St. Osyth witch trial (1582), in Essex, imps or familiars were identified as ''puppets, spirits, or mammet-

tes.'' A bit further on, *puppet* and *mammet* are used as proper names for familiars. Alice Manfield testifies that she has four imps, the last of which is ''Puppet alias Mamet.'' Puppet seems to be a ''she'' familiar—the weaker sort, according to Ursula Kemp's testimony. See *The Witchcraft Papers: Contemporary Records of the Witchcraft Hysteria in Essex, 1560–1700,* ed. Peter Haining, 56 and 58 (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1974). Finally, Lewis Spence uses the term *puppet* to describe the ''stocks'' left in place of women and children abducted by the fairies. See *The Fairy Tradition in Britain* (New York: Rider and Company, 1948), 242.

61. *The Scottish History of James the Fourth*, The Malone Society Reprints, W. W. Greg, ed. (1598; reprint Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1921), lns. 20–21 and 80.

62. C. L. Barber notes that the May Lady's role could be played by ''Many pagan goddesses, as well as nymphs,'' and goes on to note, ''On other occasions there is an English name for the goddess, the Fairy Queen; she may come with her maids to dance and sing in the garden.'' *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy: A Study of Dramatic Form in Relation to Social Custom*, 2nd. ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1972), 34. Such an identificatory association, incidentally, aligns Helena once again with the topos of inversion since the maypole is the centerpiece of a public saturnalian celebration.

63. Dash notes Oberon's seemingly contradictory uses of the magic herb: ''Ironically, Oberon, who would have the fairy queen exhibit the kind of self-abasement practiced by Helena, expresses great sympathy for the mortal woman.'' *Women's Worlds*, 94.

64. The uses to which Oberon puts the love juice simultaneously align him with and distinguish him from his demonic spiritual counterparts, witches. Frances Dolan notes that in the witchcraft plays of the early modern era, supernatural influence in love relationships typically affected men negatively while it impacted women positively. With respect to witches, specifically, Dolan contends:

> Playing on conceptions of sexual desire as invading from without, the drama explores the role of such malicious outsiders in instilling, removing or manipulating eros, which was already understood as invasive. This interference focuses on men. Whether they seek the witch's assistance or are the victims of her spells, magic works to frustrate and humiliate them and to support women's integrity and self-determination. Many witch plays focus on the coercion of sexual choice—rape and enforced marriage; but while physical, financial, and parental pressures act to constrain women, witches do not. When male characters turn to witches as a means to secure women's love, the witches consistently refuse to provide this service. They can interfere with intercourse, but they cannot control love, which is depicted as too deeply rooted in the subject's consciousness to be tampered with. As this works out in the plots, witches can manipulate male characters' sexual responses but cannot interfere in female characters' feelings, desires, or wills.

See *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 215. While this description fits very well what transpires between Helena and Demetrius, fairy magic seems to differ from witchcraft in its capacity to interfere in female characters' feelings, desires, and wills since Titania develops a healthy lust for an ass-polled weaver and loses the force of her will to oppose Oberon's demand for the changeling boy (at least temporarily) under its influence.

65. See *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England*, 31. Bicks's reading of the Indian votaress/Titania/Oberon triangle is excellent, with the caveat that she sees Oberon as the center of power.

66. *The Feminine Reclaimed*, 126.

67. In that passage, Oberon tells Puck:

> . . . I saw, but thou couldst not,
> Flying between the cold moon and the earth
> Cupid, all armed. A certain aim he took
> At a fair vestal thronèd by the west,
> And loosed his love shaft smartly from his bow
> As it should pierce a hundred thousand hearts;
> But I might see young Cupid's fiery shaft
> Quenched in the chaste beams of the watery moon,
> And the imperial vot'ress passèd on,
> In maiden meditation, fancy-free.
> Yet marked I where the bolt of Cupid fell:
> It fell upon a little western flower,
> Before milk-white, now purple with love's wound.
>
> (II.i.156–67)

It is fitting that Oberon, monarch by marriage of the fairy realm, is able to see Cupid in flight between the Earth and the Moon—the same sort of ambiguous region neither in the heavens nor of the earth that the fairies themselves inhabit.

68. *The Purpose of Playing: Shakespeare and the Cultural Politics of the Elizabethan Theatre* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 170.

69. As C. L. Barber and René Girard, among others, do, David P. Young addresses the fact that Hippolyta has a point when she says that the lovers' story is rather persuasive: "In the play's terms, there are such things as fairies, and, by extension, there is truth in antique fables and fairy toys. . . . Theseus has conveniently forgotten what we remember hearing in the first act: that he, like the lovers, like Bottom, was once a fairy victim too, led 'through the glimmering night' by Titania herself, who has followed his fortunes and come to bless his wedding." *Something of Great Constancy*, 139.

70. Thus, I disagree with Barbara Freedman's view that "Oberon's manipulation of vision, however tricky, ultimately affirms a patriarchal ideology that equates men with right perspective and women with an irrational nature that defies orderly sight." See "Dis/Figuring Power: Censorship and Representation in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*," in *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Critical Essays*, ed. Dorothea Kehler, 206 (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998).

71. *Women's Worlds*, 96.

72. For these and other details about Midsummer Day, see David Cressy, *Bonfires & Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 25–26. The quoted material is from page 26.

73. Henry VIII ordered the dissolution of the monasteries (including convents) in 1536 and 1539. Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 22.

74. Keith Sagar refers specifically to the punishment that Theseus offers Hermia for refusing to marry Demetrius as "to become a nun." He contends that this barren, unappealing form of spirituality is set off against the vibrant fertility of the play's other sort of spirits, the fairies, who oversee the play's marriages. "*A Midsummer Night's Dream*: A Marriage of Heaven and Hell," *Critical Survey* 7, no. 1 (1995): 38–39.

75. For the original testimony provided by these and other visitors to fairyland, see Pitcairn's *Ancient Criminal Trials*. Diane Purkiss discusses the matriarchal, sexualized world of fairyland with respect to *MND* and the testimony of one Andro Man, professed lover of the fairy queen for thirty-two years. See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 134–39; see also Henderson and Cowan, *Scottish Fairy Belief*, 58, and Alec Derwent

Hope, *A Midsummer Eve's Dream: Variations on a Theme by William Dunbar* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), 92.

76. Marjorie Garber contends that both Titania's bower and the serpent in Hermia's dream function as in-text allusions to the Genesis account of the Eden myth. See *Dream in Shakespeare: From Metaphor to Metamorphosis* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1974), 72. See also Marina Warner's *From the Beast to the Blonde: On Fairy Tales and Their Tellers* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), 144–45, for a discussion of the associative links between witches and asses, particularly with respect to sexuality.

77. *A Midsummer Night's Dream: Texts and Contexts*, ed. Gail Kern Paster and Skiles Howard (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1999), 307–8.

78. "Bottom's Name and His Epiphany," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Winter 1978): 81.

79. R. Chris Hassel, Jr., "Saint Paul and Shakespeare's Romantic Comedies," *Thought* 46 (1971): 377.

80. Roland Frye also finds Shakespeare's works ambivalent or, at best, enigmatic on questions of religious dogma. *Shakespeare and Christian Doctrine* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963).

81. "The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland," *Folklore* 111 (2000): 301–2.

82. David P. Young emphasizes the importance of the fairies' reappearance in act V of the play, noting that "Theseus unwittingly adds the final twist by announcing that it is 'almost fairy time.' Then, as the mortals leave the stage, Puck replaces them with his superb nocturnal litany and all the fairies troop in to bless the marriages. By coming round to 'fairy time' again, the play asserts the validity and constancy of both its worlds, day and night, reason and imagination." *Something of Great Constancy*, 88–89. The return of the fairies is certainly important, as is the fact that they may oversee the goings on in the wood but are not confined to it.

83. The title of Strier's article makes clear why he would find such a reading of the play's epilogue mistaken: "Shakespeare and the Skeptics," *Religion and Literature* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 180.

84. I am referring here to Theseus's act I injunction to Hermia:

> To you your father should be as a god—
> One that composed your beauties, yea, and one
> To whom you are but as a form in wax
> By him imprinted, and within his power
> To leave the figure or disfigure it.
>
> (I.i.47–51)

Chapter 2. "Ferry Honest Knaueries"

A version of this chapter has been previously published as "Shakespeare's Fairy Dance with Catholicism," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard, 195–219 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003). I am grateful to Fordham University Press for permission to revisit this material here.

1. *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: A Facsimile of the First Folio, 1623* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 74.

2. Qtd. in Lewis Spence, *The Fairy Tradition in Britain* (New York: Rider and Company, 1948), 20.

3. The quote in the section head is taken from Robert Herrick, ''The Fairie Temple,'' *The Complete Poetry of Robert Herrick*, ed. J. Max Patrick, The Stuart Editions (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 129.

4. Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970), 148.

5. James I, *Daemonologie*, The English Experience: Its Record in Early Printed Books Published in Facsimile, no. 94 (1597; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., 1969), 40.

6. John Webster, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* (London, 1677), 283.

7. These cases include *The Examination of John Walsh before Maister Thomas Williams, Commissary to the Reverend father in God William bishop of Exeter, upon certayne Interrogatories touchyng Wytchcrafte and Sorcerye, in the presence of divers gentlemen and others* (London: John Awdely, 1566), available on microfilm and reprinted in Barbara Rosen, *Witchcraft in England, 1558–1618* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 64–71; the case of Bessie Dunlop in R. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, vol. 1, part 2 (Edinburgh, 1833), 49–58; and the case of Alesoun Peirsoun in Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials*, vol. 1, part 3, 161–65.

8. Jonson became ''a professed Catholic'' in 1599 or 1600, according to C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, eds., *Ben Jonson*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925), 104.

9. Stephen Greenblatt, ''Shakespeare's Family,'' General Introduction, *The Norton Shakespeare* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1997), 43.

10. Kristen Poole, for example, argues that Falstaff's bombastic biblical rhetoric in the first two parts of the Henriad parodies late sixteenth-century Lollardy. However, Poole finds the Falstaff of *Merry Wives* ''emptied of his religious associations.'' *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 201 fn. 73. As the ensuing argument will make clear, I think that Shakespeare has redirected much of the religious commentary in *Merry Wives*, relying on the characterization of the Welsh parson, Sir Hugh Evans, to satirize Elizabethan religiopolitical conflicts.

11. Carol Thomas Neely identifies *Merry Wives* as ''the only play set in contemporary England and the only comedy that deals with the middle class and in which wives are protagonists.'' See ''Constructing Female Sexuality in the Renaissance: Stratford, London,Windsor, Vienna,'' *Feminism and Psychoanalysis*, ed. Richard Feldstein and Judith Roof, 217 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). For his part, William Carroll considers *The Merry Wives of Windsor* a continuation of William Shakespeare's ''comic exploration of marriage, monsters, and metamorphosis'' in plays such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* rather than of the Henriad. *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 141.

12. William Carroll makes much the same point, noting, ''The merry wives are the most accomplished tricksters. In conducting their deceptions, they three times resort to play-acting and theatrical imagery so openly that their performances may fairly be termed plays-within-the-play.'' See '' 'A Received Belief': Imagination in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*,'' *Studies in Philology* 74 (1977): 206.

13. Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 195.

14. All references to *The Merry Wives of Windsor* will be to *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 251–87, unless otherwise noted.

15. Roger Chartier's observations about the complexities of the intersection be-

tween organized religion and popular belief are instructive here: "'Popular' religion is at the same time both acculturated and acculturating; therefore it cannot be identified either as radically different from the religion of the clerics or as completely molded by them. We must replace the study of cultural sets that were considered as socially pure with another point of view that recognizes each cultural form as a mixture, whose constituent elements meld together indissolubly." See "Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France," in *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Steven L. Kaplan, 233 (New York: Mouton Publishers, 1984).

16. *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 158. Matthew Woodcock seconds this belief in *Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 14 fn.16.

17. Samuel Harsenet, *A Declaration of egregious Popish Impostures, to with-draw the harts of her Maiesties Subjects from their allegeance, and from the truth of Christian Religion professed in England, vnder the pretence of casting out deuils* (London: James Roberts, 1603), 137.

18. Sandra Clark identifies the Wives' careful plotting against Falstaff as "their playlet," noting, "The wives are skilful [*sic*] planners, staging the first trick on Falstaff with a careful regard to details like timing and the briefing of minor players in their roles." See "'Wives may be merry and yet honest too': Women and Wit in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and Some Other Plays," in *"Fanned and Winnowed Opinions": Shakespearean Essays Presented to Harold Jenkins*, ed. John W. Mahon and Thomas A. Pendleton, 260 (New York: Methuen, 1987).

19. Susan Amussen points out the way in which gender constituted an additional class distinction in early modern England: "The gender hierarchy was superficially much simpler than that of class: as wives were subject to their husbands, so women were subject to men, whose authority was sustained informally through culture, custom and differences in education, and more formally through the law. Yet . . . as parents, mistresses and even as wealthy neighbours women might have authority over men—a contradiction which made gender a problem in the class system, just as class became a problem in the gender system." See *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 3. Thus, women may have precedence over men below them in the social hierarchy, such as children, and servants.

20. Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 194.

21. See, for example, Roger Moss, "Falstaff as a Woman," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 10, no. 1 (Fall 1995): 31–41; Neely, "Constructing Female Sexuality in the Renaissance," 209–29; Scott Cutler Shershow, *Puppets and Popular Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 76; and Frederick B. Jonassen, "The Meaning of Falstaff's Allusion to the Jack-a-Lent in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," *Studies in Philology* 88, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 46–68. Roger Moss points out that even in the Henriad Falstaff is aligned with the negative aspects of the feminine, such as cowardice, verbosity, and changeability. See "Falstaff as a Woman," 36–37. Marjorie Garber also notes that "recent literary and psychoanalytic criticism has tended more and more to see Falstaff—both the Falstaff of the history plays and the Falstaff of *Merry Wives*—as embodying a 'feminine principle' or as exhibiting pre-Oedipal symptoms like orality, appetite, and unbounded desire." See *Vested Interests: Cross-Dressing and Cultural Anxiety* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 39. Finally, Wendy Wall observes, "Since Falstaff is made to play the part of the wayward court maid subject to the castigation of housewife and Queen, *Merry Wives* uses popular tradition to

analogize community, household, and court.'' See ''Why Does Puck Sweep? Shakespearean fairies and the politics of cleaning,'' chap. 3, *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 115.

22. As Stevie Davies observes, ''In art we may be free to express our dearest prejudices; we are also free to do justice and to desecrate socially sanctified lies.'' *The Feminine Reclaimed: The Idea of Woman in Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986), 2.

23. Phillip Stubbes, *The Anatomie of Abuses, Illustrations of Early English Literature,* vol. 1, ed. J. Payne Collier, (1583; reprint, London, 1867–70), 75.

24. In *The Old Book Collector's Miscellany,* edited by Charles Hindley. The text that is included in this reprint edition was published in London for James Boler in 1630. However, Taylor asserts in the middle of the text, ''I wrote this before his [Shrove-Tuesday's] coming this year 1617.'' See John Taylor, *Jack a Lent, His Beginning and Entertainment. In The Old Book Collector's Miscellany: or, a Collection of Readable Reprints of Literary Rarities, Illustrative of the History, Literature, Manners, and Biography of the English Nation during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,* ed. Charles Hindely, Esq., vol. 2, entry #14 (London: Reeves and Turner, 1872), 11.

25. Ibid., 4.

26. See Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft,* especially pages 127, 148.

27. *Jack a Lent,* 5–6.

28. Ibid., 19.

29. Ibid., 5.

30. Shershow, *Puppets and "Popular" Culture,* 49. Shershow is speaking of the cultural evolution of puppets only; I have noted the parallel evolution of fairy belief.

31. Ibid.

32. Likening boy actors' own persons to puppets, Shershow asks, ''would not the diminutive child actor who played the page visually evoke those entwined linguistic associations of 'apishness,' parody, and dimunition manifest in the word and the idea of the puppet?'' *Puppets and "Popular" Culture,* 83.

33. The line quoted in the section heading is delivered by Mistress Page at IV.ii.97. The description of Herne the Hunter is quoted later. For an amusing survey of the beliefs associated with Herne the Hunter, see Jabez Allies, Esq., F.S.A., *On The Jovial Hunter of Bromsgrove, Horne the Hunter, and Robin Hood, Tracts, 1835–1846* (London: Simpkin, Marshall & Co, 1846). The essay is largely conjectural; by the end, Allies is speculating that Herne the Hunter could be Robin Hood (whom he treats as a real person). See 18–22.

34. As Sandra Clark notes, the final tricking of Falstaff is a group effort but, significantly, ''the women remain in control, and arrive between themselves at the 'device' whereby Falstaff will be lured to Herne's Oak, and pinched and mocked.'' '' 'Wives may be merry and yet honest too,'' 263.

35. See Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968); Katherine Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge, 1959); Katharine Briggs, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); and Robert Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth* (London: Reprinted by James Ballantyne & Co. for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1815).

36. This is according to the stage direction in Q, which Bevington includes in his edition of the F text.

37. Shershow, *Puppets and "Popular" Culture,* 60.

38. Ibid., 68.

39. Of the roles of Mistresses Page and Ford, M. C. Bradbrook writes, ''these are not parts for boys. On the Elizabethan stage older women were played by men, and these are the star parts of the play, designed for leading actors.'' See ''Royal Command: *The Merry Wives of Windsor,*'' chap. 5, *Shakespeare the Craftsman: The Clark Lectures* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969), 80.

40. Including King James I and John Penry, whose views are discussed more fully earlier and later.

41. Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 16–44.

42. The spelling in the section heading approximates the Welsh parson Hugh Evans's invocation to the child-actor fairies of *MWW,* to ''trip, trip,'' after him to Falstaff's gulling, V.iv.1.

43. John Penry, *A Treatise Concerning the Aequity of an Humble Supplication,* in *Three Treatises Concerning Wales,* ed. David Williams, 32–33 (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960). This passage is quoted in full in the text that follows. Peter Lake reports that Thomas Nashe wrote against John Penry in a manner calculated to suggest that he was, in fact, Martin Marprelate. See his discussion of Nashe's *The First Part of Pasquil's Apology* in *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists & Players In Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 529–54.

44. Although *Merry Wives* was likely written at least a decade after the Martin Marprelate controversy, Kristen Poole notes that the legacy of the furious religious debate ''continued to thrive long after the silencing of the tracts and sensational stage manifestations'' as the figure of Martin himself ''remained a vivid cultural figure for the next fifty years.'' See *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton,* 32.

45. David Williams, introduction to *Three Treatises Concerning Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1960), xiv–xv.

46. Penry, *Treatise Concerning the Aequity,* 32–33.

47. As Diane Purkiss puts it, ''All uses of the fairies are therefore uses of the past. Whenever the fairies ride, the past rides with them. . . . For Protestant reformers, Catholicism, like the fairies, was constantly threatening to rise from a shallow and uneasy grave and ride again through the land.'' See *At the Bottom of the Garden,* 141.

48. *Plaine Perceval the Peace-Maker of England; Being a Reply to Martin Mar-Prelate,* Reprinted from the Black Letter Edition with an Introduction and Notes (London: John Russell Smith, 1860), 25–27.

49. Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 28.

50. In II.iii and III.i of the play, the Host of the Garter Inn deceives both the Welsh Evans and his counterpart in marginality, the French physician, Dr. Caius, by setting them up for a duel that each thinks is being held in a different location.

51. Juliette Wood, ''Fairy Bride Tradition in Wales,'' *Folklore* 103, no. 1 (1992): 62.

52. Fairies are usually imagined to wear the sort of attire in which Mistress Page costumes her fairy cast—clothing of red, white, or green. See Richard Bovet, *Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster, being a further blow to modern Sadduceism, proving the existence of witches and spirits* (London: Thomas Malthus, 1684), 208. Fairy food was believed to trap anyone who ate it forever in fairyland. Any humans who had been living in fairyland who chanced to return to the mortal realm often languished and died because human food could no longer nourish them. By contrast, humans offered fairy food outside the fairy community were often granted near-miraculous abilities to sustain life without nourishment. Fairy language was frequently con-

strued to be incomprehensible to humans unless the fairies chose to make it so. For all of these beliefs, see the general discussions of fairy lore in Thomas Keightley, Katharine Briggs, Peter Narváez, *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991) and Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972).

53. Mistress Page need not have been so circumspect; A. R. Wright reports that "Herne the Hunter is also said to have been heard near Windsor in 1926." See *English Folklore*, 57.

54. But see Joan Rees's "Shakespeare's Welshmen" where she contends that though Evans is ultimately absorbed into his community, it is "without honour, dignity, or even language, save for a ridiculous version of the tongue of his masters." See "Shakespeare's Welshmen," *Literature and Nationalism,* ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, 38 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991).

55. Jeanne Addison Roberts, "'The Merry Wives of Windsor' as a Hallowe'en Play," *Shakespeare Survey* 25 (1975): 108–9.

56. *The Merry Wives of Windsor 1602*, Shakespeare Quarto Facsimiles no. 3, ed. W. W. Greg (London: The Shakespeare Association and Sidgwick and Jackson, Limited, 1939), sig. G3 recto.

57. Poole, *Radical Religion*, 39.

58. Mistress Page speaks the line quoted in the section heading of her daughter, Anne Page (IV.iv.70).

59. In the main I will defer to two preceding studies that are very thorough on the distinctions between the two texts: Steven Urkowitz, "Two Versions of *Romeo and Juliet* 2.6 and *Merry Wives of Windsor* 5.5.215–45: An Invitation to the Pleasure of Textual/Sexual Di(Per)versity," in *Elizabethan Theater*, ed. R. B. Parker and S. P. Zitner, 222–38 (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996); and Y. S. Bains, *Making Sense of the First Quartos of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, Henry V, The Merry Wives of Windsor*, and *Hamlet* (Rashtrapati Nivas, Shimla: Indian Institute of Advanced Study, 1995), esp. 78–105.

Jeanne Addison Roberts's detailed analysis of the Quarto and Folio versions of the play reveals that "The progress of the plot is essentially the same in both versions, but the lengths are notably different: 1624 lines in Q as opposed to 3,018 lines in F according to the count of W. W. Greg recorded in his introduction to *The Merry Wives: 1602* (1910)." She goes on to note that "Q omits four scenes found in act 5 of F and throughout omits parts of scenes and speeches. . . . One Q scene, the final one, is quite different from F, but much of Q's scene is rejected as non-Shakespearean by many critics." See *Shakespeare's English Comedy: The Merry Wives of Windsor in Context* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1979), 1, 2. Q emphasizes the power of the women characters—particularly Anne and her mother—in the final fairy scene in ways that F does not. Since it was published and sold Q is a useful cultural artifact regardless of its proximity to or distance from the presumably "authoritative version" of the play in F.

60. *The Merry Wives of Windsor 1602*, sig. F3 verso.

61. Marriages were, as were most social institutions, male-governed in early modern England, both within the context of the husband-wife relationship and in the arrangements fathers made for their daughters' unions. Suzanne Hull points out that the extant writing from the early modern period relating to marital issues is largely that of men and it is, furthermore, largely prescriptive. See *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 18.

62. While it is difficult to separate the wheat from the chaff in Mistress Quickly's hyperbolic ramblings, there is, presumably, at least a grain of truth to these claims.

63. M. C. Bradbrook draws a similar, though more general comparison, noting that "Mrs. Quickly . . . is much more like Juliet's nurse." See "Royal Command: *The Merry Wives of Windsor*," chap. 5, *Shakespeare the Craftsman: The Clark Lectures* (New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1969), 79.

64. Judith J. Kollmann, "Ther is noon other incubus but he: *The Canterbury Tales, Merry Wives of Windsor* and Falstaff," in *Chaucerian Shakespeare: Adaptation and Transformation*, ed. E. Talbot Donaldson and Judith J. Kollmann, 53, 54, Medieval and Renaissance Monograph Series II, eds. Guy R. Mermier and Edelgard E. DuBruck (Detroit, MI: Michigan Consortium for Medieval and Early Modern Studies, 1983).

65. Stephen Orgel notes that, though there were ambiguities in the English marital system, "Fathers were legally entitled to arrange their daughters' marriages as they saw fit, and of course had control of all property that accompanied the daughter; but the legal age of consent was twelve for women (fourteen for men), which meant that daughters over the age of twelve were also legally entitled to arrange their own marriages." See "Nobody's Perfect: Or Why Did the English Stage Take Boys for Women?" *South Atlantic Quarterly* 88 (1989): 18.

66. Carol Thomas Neely contends that "The older women's schemes are thwarted only by the Pages' daughter, Anne, who has the last word about her marriage, a triple inversion in a world in which men supposedly had authority over women, parents over children, the old over the young. By acting independently, Anne, like the wives, protects herself from those who would exploit her sexuality and marriageability for economic or social ends." See "Constructing Female Sexuality in the Renaissance," 220.

67. Sandra Clark, for instance, asserts, "Anne gets Fenton in the end but not because she exercises her wit to do so. In conspicuous contrast with the other women in the play, Anne is quiet, self-effacing, apparently the passive recipient of what others choose to do and give to her. . . . Fenton is shown taking charge of the plotting which will ensure that true love wins out." "'Wives May Be Merry and Yet Honest Too," 263–64.

68. Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 55. Suzanne Hull contends that "no matter how advantageous an arranged marriage appeared to be, ideally neither the man nor the woman was to be forced into an unwelcome marriage." See *Women According to Men*, 146. Susan Amussen adds that "Parents were to aid their children in the choice of a spouse, though the extent of parents' authority over their children's marriages was a subject of debate." See *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 40. And Judith Kollmann contends that, "The forced marriage was viewed with increasing disapproval in the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries." Later she asserts that "the forced marriage was a highly topical issue, and prevailing contemporary bourgeois opinion was in favor of permitting the bride freedom in choosing her husband, even to the point of opposing her parents." See Kollmann, "Ther Is Noon Other Incubus," 49, 60.

69. Hull notes, for example, that "the books argued that it was the father's responsibility to settle his daughter in an appropriate marriage and to see that she was brought up as a chaste and worthy candidate for that goal. But the father was cautioned to consider the class in which his daughter would be a wife." See *Women According to Men*, 135.

70. *The Merry Wives of Windsor 1602*, sig. G4 recto.

71. Steven Urkowitz, "Two Versions of *Romeo and Juliet*," 230.

72. *The Merry Wives of Windsor 1602*, sig. G4 verso.

73. Urkowitz, ''Two Versions of *Romeo and Juliet*, 234–235.

74. As Y. S. Bains notes, ''Anne is more of a romantic figure and the audience can get a better sense of her in F than in Q.'' *Making Sense of the First Quartos*, 103.

75. The enraged Dr. Caius delivers this line after attempting to elope with a boy in fairy disguise whom he believes to be Anne Page (V.v.201).

76. Carroll, *The Metamorphoses of Shakespearean Comedy*, 200.

77. The F speech prefixes for Mistress Quickly and the Fairy Queen are very similar but do leave open the possibility that Anne Page (or an entirely different disguised fairy) is intended to play the role. Quickly's speech prefixes are ''Qui'' while those of the Fairy Queen are ''Qu.'' Furthermore, the Q's are executed in different fonts. See *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies, Histories, & Tragedies: A Facsimile of the First Folio, 1623* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 77.

78. These direct references to Windsor Castle do not appear in the quarto text. Rather, there the focus is on the ability of fairies to identify those guilty of sexual indiscretions.

79. Wendy Wall explains that ''Ford and Falstaff learn, through the grammar of domesticity, to cede authority. As its title may lead us to predict, the play offers a female fantasy in which household labor insures pleasure, profit, and social order.'' *Staging Domesticity*, 121.

80. See Woodcock, *Fairy in The Faerie Queene*, 30–50, and Purkiss, ''Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen,'' in ''*This Double Voice'': Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, chap. 5, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 103–22 (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

81. For clear examples of Elizabeth's intense and public displeasure with the Martin Marprelate tracts, see Poole, *Radical Religion*, 31.

82. *Mr. William Shakespeares Comedies*, 74. The spelling in the Bevington edition is ''fery honest knaveries'' (IV.v.79).

Chapter 3. The Fairy Quean

In act IV, scene v, of *The Alchemist*, the ostensibly devout Puritan, Mammon, gives the duplicitous Dol Common occasion to launch into a faux fit of sectarian Puritan raving by referring to the ''fifth monarchy,'' the term that early modern Puritans used to identify the second coming of Christ. All references to *The Alchemist* are taken from *Ben Jonson's Plays and Masques*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Robert M. Adams (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979). Critics and commentators dealing with *The Alchemist* almost universally use the Herford and Simpson–edited text of the play; I use the Norton out of a preference for the manner in which it presents scenes of importance for this discussion, particularly Dol's fairy and religious fundamentalist theatrics.

1. Joseph Ritson, *Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances Illustrating Shakespeare and Other Early English Writers* (London: Frank & William Kerslake, 1875), 226.

2. Ibid., 228.

3. Diane Purkiss discusses another of Alice West's celebrated dupings, of a goldsmith's apprentice, in *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 187–88. Matthew Woodcock also briefly notes the similarity among the plots of *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *The Alchemist*, and the pamphlet accounts of the chicaneries of the Wests and Judith Philips. See *Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 23 and 99.

4. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 613. Such associations with the fairies reach back to medieval times; as Matthew Woodcock notes, "the relationship between mortal and fairy . . . is also deployed within medieval romance to represent fantasies of social, economic, and political empowerment." See *Fairy in The Faerie Queene*, 35. Or, as Diane Purkiss puts it, "For the English, in particular, fairies were part of the growing enterprise culture of Elizabethan England. . . . Early modern people sought out fairies and begged them to work their magic, not in the interests of morality or soul uplift, but as a way of getting rich—and the quicker the better." *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 124. Marjorie Swann also cites *The Alchemist* as evidence that "fairy beliefs were still tenable well into the seventeenth century," noting their function as "agents of precapitalist economic transactions." "The Politics of Fairylore in Early Modern English Literature," *Renaissance Quarterly* 53, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 454 and 451. For her part, Barbara Rosen finds that "court cases dealing with people swindled by a promise of introduction to the Fairy Queen exist for 1609/10 and 1612, so we must assume that the predilection for treasure seeking by magic was as strong as ever, and the tricksters (like some magicians) had simply changed the names of the spirits involved to avoid falling foul of the law. Fairies were still powerful agents of superstition among countryfolk and the simpler townsmen, but they were beneath the dignity of lawyers and judges." See *Witchcraft*, The Stratford-Upon-Avon Library 6 (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 214. See chapter five of the present study for a more detailed discussion of the extent to which early modern Britons seemed to believe that consorting with fairies was a less execrable offense than witchcraft or demon worship.

5. As Diane Purkiss observes of the Alice West narrative, "Whereas the mainstream notion of enterprise involved a virtuous storing up of the fruits of labour, the fairy queen offered a way to short-circuit all that, a chance for a miraculous and meteoric rise that was intrinsically undeserved. As such, she could not help but symbolize both the transgressive pleasures and the instability of enterprise culture, and because the queen was a woman, that instability became linked with female rule through her. This has stark implications for the representation of Elizabeth as the fairy queen." See "Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen," "*This Double Voice": Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, chap. 5, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 112 (New York: St. Martin's, 2000).

6. In the Induction to *Ben Jonson and Theatre* Richard Cave writes: "It is often argued, for example, that Doll [*sic*] is an inferior role to that of Face or Subtle in *The Alchemist*, that the actress has less stage-time than the two men in their venture tripartite and less flashy possibilities to display as impressive a range of technical accomplishments. Yet it could equally well be argued that Doll's role marks a significant turning point in Jonson's representation of women. . . . Doll's role demonstrates psychological insight, social acumen, force of personality and a brilliant line in acting skills." See *Ben Jonson and Theatre: Performance, Practice and Theory*, ed. Richard Cave, Elizabeth Schafer, and Brian Woolland (New York: Routledge, 1999), 2–3. Genista McIntosh reflects that Jonson's "'big plays are driven by the men, and the women are quite significantly marginalized: even Doll [*sic*]. It's a good showy role for an actress, and actresses like to do it but in terms of contribution to the plot, although she certainly makes an impact on the outcome, she isn't the engine.'" See Elizabeth Schafer, "Daughters of Ben," in *Ben Jonson and Theatre*, 166.

7. The pair draw lots to determine which of them will sleep with her. Face quips that "the longest cut at night, / Shall draw thee for his Dol Particular" (I.i.178). As Helen Ostovich notes, although Dol's "concern is the principle of 'equality' within

the partnership,'' she is traded back and forth as a sexual treat between the two men. ''Dol herself has no straw and no veto.'' See '' *The Alchemist*,'' in *Jonson: Four Comedies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, 40 (New York: Longman, 1997).

8. As Emma Wilby notes of Scottish witchcraft depositions, ''The term 'familiar' was used in the period to both denote the witch's demonic spirit and in a more general sense, personal helping spirits, often defined as fairies.'' See ''The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland,'' *Folklore* 111 (2000): 284. However, as Wilby demonstrates, familiar spirits were in some ambiguous way considered distinct from fairies in the early modern spiritual reckoning; that is why zealous witch prosecutors tried continually to turn the conversations of those convicted of witchcraft to their familiar spirits from their detailed accounts of sojourns with the fairies. See chapter five of this work for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon.

9. Compare, for example, the accounts of Alisoun Pearson and Bessie Dunlop, who were ''convict and burnt,'' in R. Pitcairn's *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1833), with Moses Pitt's account of Ann Jeffries, who was acquitted (*An account of one Ann Jeffries, now living in the County of Cornwall* [London, 1696]). Jeffries's case will be explored in greater detail in chapter five.

10. According to Herford and Simpson, ''Several passages imply that the action is itself supposed to take place in this very year, 1610. During this summer and autumn (from July 12 to November 22) the plague raged in London, and Jonson astutely contrived to give his attack upon the crying scandal of alchemy a direct bearing upon the sensation of the hour.'' '' *The Alchemist*,'' in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 2, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 87 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925). For the significance of Blackfriars as a locale, see Alan C. Dessen, *Jonson's Moral Comedy* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1971), 134; Robert N. Watson, '' *The Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy,'' in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 338–39 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986); and Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 160. In ''Who Is Lovewit? What Is He?'' Gurr provides an excellent, detailed discussion of the Blackfriars neighborhood of the early Jacobean period. See *Ben Jonson and Theatre*, 6–9. As Peter Lake notes, ''At the center of [Jonson's] plays was the audience's recognition of their city, their social world being guyed, mimicked, affirmed and celebrated even as it was being ridiculed, morally excoriated and schooled on the stage before them.'' *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists & Players In Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 583.

11. Dol is still wearing her Fairy Queen costume when she and Subtle plot to sneak off and divide the loot between them, leaving Face alone to take the blame.

12. Katherine Briggs, *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 55.

13. Richard Harp, ''Ben Jonson's Comic Apocalypse,'' *Cithara* 34, no. 1 (November 1994): 36.

14. See the preceding chapter for a discussion of the fairy significance of this argument, first mounted by Jeanne Addison Roberts in '' 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' as a Hallowe'en Play,'' *Shakespeare Survey* 25 (1975): 107–12.

15. Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 152.

16. '' *The Alchemist*,'' in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 2, 88 fn. 1.

17. Kathleen McLuskie, *Renaissance Dramatists*, Feminist Readings Series, ed. Sue Roe (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), 58.

18. W. B. Worthen identifies the need to "relocate the function of the text in the performance, conceive the text as material for labor, for the work of production." "Drama, Performativity, and Performance," *PMLA* 113, no. 5 (October 1998), 1098. Though it is impossible to recreate completely the conditions of performance of early modern dramatic works such as *The Alchemist*, we must use what information we do have about the means of production and the conditions of those means—the sociocultural milieu in which these texts were performed—to make efforts toward imaginatively understanding these plays in production and in interaction with their audiences. Since the texts are only remnants of the message/"reality" conveyed by their performances, we need to think about the public presentations of these texts even to begin to understand what they meant and what they conveyed to contemporary audiences.

19. Jonathan Haynes contends, "Subtle and Face and Doll represent new social possibilities, are figures of and for new spaces, fissures, and energies in London society." See "Representing the Underworld," *Studies in Philology* 86, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 18.

20. Donald Gertmenian, "Comic Experience in *Volpone* and *The Alchemist*," *Studies in English Literature*, 17, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 253 and 255.

21. For fuller consideration of the antitheatricalist controversy, see the excellent analyses of Andrew Gurr, *Playgoing in Shakespeare's London* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jean Howard, *The Stage and Social Struggle in Early Modern England* (New York: Routledge, 1994); and Steven Mullaney, *The Place of the Stage: License, Play, and Power in Renaissance England* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988). Jonas Barish links the Puritan loathing for theatricality directly to their concomitant loathing for the lavish ostentation of the Catholic Mass. See *The Antitheatrical Prejudice* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 159–62. Margot Heinemann sounds an important cautionary note about the antitheatrical controversy: "The more we come to know of these complex opposition movements ['radical, Parliamentarian or Puritan movements'] through the recent work of seventeenth-century historians, the less satisfactory it seems to treat Parliamentary Puritanism simply as anti-theatre, anti-dramatist." *Puritanism and Theatre: Thomas Middleton and Opposition Drama under the Early Stuarts*, Past and Present Publications (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), vii.

22. Face wishes, "O, for a suit / To fall now like a curtain flap!" (IV.ii.7). Richard Allen Cave uses this scene as the occasion to praise the rogues' acting abilities effusively:

> Their technique is dazzling as they shift effortlessly between seven differently evolving scenarios, all running concurrently, several by Act Three being developed simultaneously. At one point this requires Face to perform a veritable *tour de force*: he speaks in Lungs' voice through the keyhole to Sir Epicure waiting without; in his own workaday tones *sotto voce* giving instructions to Dol and Subtle; as the captain advising the blindfolded Dapper how to conduct himself through the ritual in which he is being "purified" ready to meet his aunt, the Queen of Faery; and in squeaking falsetto as one of the elves searching the clerk for evidence of worldly pelf.

See *Ben Jonson*, 84. The energy of this description captures the frenetic energy of the play itself, which is closely allied to the fairy qualities of chameleonlike alteration and lightning speed.

23. A number of critics discuss the play's theatricality. See Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson, Dramatist* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 142; Richard Allen Cave, *Ben Jonson*, English Dramatists, ed. Bruce King, 78 (New York: St. Martin's

Press, 1991); Ian Donaldson, *Jonson's Magic Houses: Essays in Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon University Press, 1997), 96; Michael Flachmann, "Ben Jonson and the Alchemy of Satire," *Studies in English Literature* 17, no. 2 (Spring 1977): 274; John S. Mebane, "The Renaissance Magus as Mock-Hero: Utopianism and Religious Enthusiasm in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*," *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 143; Joyce Van Dyke, "The Game of Wits in *The Alchemist*," *Studies in English Literature* 19 (1979): 261; and Robert N. Watson, "*The Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 338–39 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986). Characteristic of these analyses is Rosalind Miles's observation that "Within the play the metaphor of play-acting insistently recurs; all three of the rogues play part upon part within their own original part and are highly conscious of this." *Ben Jonson: His Craft and Art* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 131.

24. Rackin notes that *The Alchemist* "can, in fact, be read as an extended metaphor condemning fantastic playwrights who transgress the rule of nature and the hierarchical order of human society." See "Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage," *PMLA* 102 (1987): 35.

25. Frances Yates, *Shakespeare's Last Plays: A New Approach* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975), 115.

26. Matthew Woodcock observes of the Ditchley entertainments for Elizabeth in particular that "As problematic as they appear, and indeed there is reference to her 'infernall Arte,' the fairy queen's powers are clearly seen as analogous to Elizabeth's royal powers." Later, he notes that even Spenser "presents Gloriana in such a way that she is open to both positive and negative readings. The ambiguity surrounding her does little to limit the possibility of a negative reading." See *Fairy in The Faerie Queene: Renaissance Elf-Fashioning and Elizabethan Myth-Making* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 49 and 105.

27. Robert N. Watson, "*The Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski , 334 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

28. In addition to *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, which I discuss here, Jonson also invoked the character of Queen Mab in *A Particular Entertainment of the Queene . . . at Althorpe* (1603) to praise Queen Anne. See James A. Riddell and Stanley Stewart, *Jonson's Spenser: Evidence and Historical Criticism* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1995), 16. Robert R. Reed Jr. discusses this masque at length, noting: "In the delineation of Queen Mab and her attendant fairies, Jonson appears to have intended an allegorical portrait of Elizabeth and her court. . . . Even the mood of the piece suggests that Jonson was mindful of Elizabeth's England: the gay spontaneity of the fairies, who 'dance a round' (thus creating 'the green circle') and in the meantime exchange impromtu banter with 'Pug' the Satyr, is Elizabethan—certainly not Jacobean—in the unforced charm of its merriment." See *The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1965), 206. Clearly Jonson was familiar with both the positive and negative Elizabethan associations with the fairy queen and the ways in which these connections could be deployed.

29. *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*, 343 ln. 36.

30. Riddell and Stewart, *Jonson's Spenser*, 16. For further discussion of Jonson's use of fairies in his masques, see Miles, *Ben Jonson*, and Stephen Orgel's excellent introduction to *Ben Jonson: The Complete Masques,* ed. Alvin B. Kernan and Richard B. Young, The Yale Ben Jonson (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1969). In

addition to *The Alchemist*, fairies are alluded to in some capacity in *Epicoene* (V.i); *Every Man Out of His Humour*; *The Satyr, A Particular Entertainment of the Queen and Prince at Althorpe*; *Oberon, the Fairy Prince*; *Love Restored;* and *The Sad Shepherd* (unfinished pastoral in 1641 folio, [Floris Delattre, *English Fairy Poetry from the Origins to the Seventeenth Century (*London: Henri Frowde, 1912), 143], and in one of the sections he contributed to *Eastward Ho* (V.i.85–108), his notorious theatrical collaboration with George Chapman and John Marston, which was censored as seditious for the fun it poked at Scots.

31. James's *Daemonologie* appeared in 1597, well before *The Alchemist*'s initial performance circa 1610.

32. Miles, *Ben Jonson*, 198–99.

33. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 5.

34. Jonathan Haynes, ''Representing the Underworld,'' *Studies in Philology* 86, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 21.

35. Ibid., 27, 20, and 29.

36. Ibid., 23.

37. Edward Partridge, *The Broken Compass: A Study of the Major Comedies of Ben Jonson* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1958), 453.

38. Catherine Gimelli Martin, ''Angels, Alchemists and Exchange: Commercial Ideology in Court and City Comedy, 1596–1620,'' in *The Witness of Times: Manifestations of Ideology in Seventeenth Century England*, Katherine Z. Keller and Gerald J. Schiffhorst, 277 fn. 21 (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1993).

39. See Susan Schoon Eberly, ''Fairies and the Folklore of Disability: Changelings, Hybrids, and the Solitary Fairy,'' in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez, 227–50 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991); and Ann Helene Bolstad Skjelbred, ''Rites of Passage as Meeting Place: Christianity and Fairylore in Connection with the Unclean Woman and the Unchristened Child,'' in *Good People*, 215–23, as well as the introduction to this text. Audrey Eccles reports that though it was widely regarded as an old wives' tale by the seventeenth century, belief in the power of the caul persisted even so. She identifies this belief as ''all but universal'' even in the seventeenth century: ''the caul was often dried and preserved in a box, although others warned midwives never to keep the caul for sorcerers to make use of.'' See *Obstetrics and Gynecology in Tudor and Stuart England* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1982), 93.

40. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 188.

41. Jonson does indicate a consciousness of Spenser's *Faerie Queene* at certain moments in his own irreverent portrayal of the epic's titular character by making oblique references to the poem. For example, in a feud feigned for the benefit of some of their gullible clients, Face promises Subtle that he brings him only good customers, and ''No cheating Clim-o'-the-Cloughs, or Claribels'' (I.ii.46). The latter reference is to an evil knight in *The Faerie Queene*.

42. Jeanette Ferreira-Ross, for instance, notes, ''Although he draws on the particular tradition, he brings to his dramatization a keen observation and considerable knowledge of contemporary sectarian movements. . . . His use of allusion is sharp and accurate, presupposing a remarkable alertness in the audience.'' ''Jonson's Satire of Puritanism in *The Alchemist*,'' *Sydney Studies in English* 17 (1991–92): 41–42.

43. Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, 2nd ed., ed. Thomas P. Roche Jr. with Patrick O'Donnell Jr., I.x.65 (New York: Penguin Books, 1987).

44. Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), 56.

45. Since Jonson published his dramatic works himself, his stage directions do have a particular relevance to textual discussion.

46. Gail Kern Paster offers a psychoanalytic reading of this scene, a positive Freudian field day. See *The Body Embarrassed: Drama and the Disciplines of Shame in Early Modern England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991), 158.

47. Robert Watson points out the fact that "The conspirators' accompanying cries of 'Ti, ti, ti, ti' were evidently conventional noises for theatrical fairies." "*The Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy," in *Renaissance Genres: Essays on Theory, History, and Interpretation*, ed. Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, 341 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1986).

48. Paster also notes the context afforded for "the fictional body of Doll [*sic*] Common and for the actual body of the transvestite actor beneath" by the play's insistent theatricality. She contends that, "Our recognition of the close relationship between those two bodies—themselves complexly gendered sites of desire, display, and identification—is continually reinforced by Doll's transformations of role and costume at the directorial commands of Face and Subtle." See *The Body Embarrassed*, 155. Dol is linked by name to puppets and, thus, to women and fairies (see my discussion of this connection in chapter two).

49. Michael Shapiro, *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 106.

50. Paster, *The Body Embarrassed*, 155.

51. See "Staging as a Key to Meaning in The Alchemist," *Theatre Survey* 29, no. 2 (November 1988): 139–53.

52. Dapper's stashing in the privy is linked to Dol's status as a whore, according to Paster, since urine in early modern medical parlance was "troped as the physician's strumpet . . . because of urine's unreliability as a diagnostic tool." Paster makes the excellent point that "Given the identification between the body of the whore and the privy, it is significant that Doll, rather than Face and Subtle, names the privy as the place to bestow Dapper." See *The Body Embarrassed*, 151 and 160.

53. Ibid., 160.

54. Ibid., 158.

55. Mario DiGangi, *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 178 fn. 15.

56. Watson also sees Dapper's interaction with Dol the fairy queen as a parody of Bottom's dalliance with Titania in *Dream*. See "*The Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy," 339.

57. Partridge, *Broken Compass*, 130–31. Linking the monarch of fairyland to witchcraft, Matthew Woodcock notes "the essential doubleness of the figure of the fairy queen in the romance and popular traditions: her capacity to both reward and punish, and to occupy an uneasy liminal space between heaven and hell." *Fairy in The Faerie Queene*, 106.

58. Partridge, *Broken Compass*, 131.

59. Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617), 90. See also Sir James Melvil's account of the witch prosecution of Amy Simpson, where he reports that at a witch's sabbat, "after that the Devil had ended his admonitions, he came down out of the Pulpit, and caused all the company come kiss his Arse: Which they said was cold like Ice, his body hard like Iron." George Scott, *The Memoires of Sir James Melvil* (London, 1683), 195.

60. In yet another instance of his inversions of cultural norms, Jonson makes several references to witchcraft in this play, but they focus on men. Face calls Subtle a witch in their fight in the first scene, and Mammon tells Face, "Thou has witched

me, rogue'' (II.iii.324), after hearing his report of the various charms of the mad lady whom Dol impersonates.

61. Partridge, *Broken Compass*, 125.

62. Brainford seems to have had quite the popular association with matters illicit: it was notorious as a site of adulterous liaisons, not to mention the fact that it is the hometown of the old woman Ford believes to be a witch in *Merry Wives*.

63. Highlighting the egalitarian nature of their criminal society, Helen Ostovich explains that ''Their magic factory is their '*republic*' in which Subtle is 'Sovereign,' Face is 'General,' and Dol is 'Queen.' But the titles do not indicate 'priority'; they hold 'All things in common,' even sexual favours.'' See ''*The Alchemist*,'' in *Jonson: Four Comedies*, ed. Helen Ostovich, 35 (New York: Longman, 1997).

64. Partridge acknowledges Dol's prodigious gold-making capacity: ''To compare her proposed intercourse with Mammon to the transmutation of base metals to gold has its aptness, for Dol is a whore whose action produces gold, whatever else it misses producing.'' *Broken Compass*, 139.

65. Van Dyke is one such critic; she considers the entire plot an elaborate game of wits between Face and Subtle. She would do well to consider the implications of the analogy she draws between Jonson's plot and a folktale plot: ''The action of the play may be described as a kind of folklore plot like the story of the three pigs, with a single serial action growing increasingly elaborate and intensified as it is repeated.'' ''The Game of Wits in *The Alchemist*,'' *Studies in English Literature* 19 (1979): 254. In the popular tale she references, there are three pigs, not two.

66. ''*The Alchemist*,'' in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 2, ed. C. H. Herford and Percy Simpson, 102 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925).

67. The irony inherent in such a reactionary assault when launched by the son of a bricklayer who managed to work his way up to the highest sphere of the court, as poet laureate, is, of course, worthy of another chapter at least as long again as this one.

68. Having noted in Jonson himself ''something of the puritan,'' Peter Lake observes, ''Tellingly, only once in these plays did Jonson confront the subject of puritan learning or scholarship, and it was surely no accident that he chose to do so in the distinctly ambiguous figure of Hugh Broughton, a divine known for his learning in Hebrew texts, his consequently rather dubious contacts with learned rabbis and his elaborate and numerically precise eschatological speculations and projections.'' See *The Antichrist's Lewd Hat: Protestants, Papists & Players In Post-Reformation England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 590 and 608.

69. A significant number of critics address Jonson's impressive command of jargon, slang, and overblown religious rhetoric in *The Alchemist*. See J. B. Bamborough, ''The Rusticity of Ben Jonson,'' in *Jonson and Shakespeare*, ed. Ian Donaldson, 137–38 (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1983); Anne Barton, *Ben Jonson: His Craft and Art* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 149; Richard Allen Cave, *Ben Jonson*, English Dramatists, ed. Bruce King, 89 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991); Jeanette Ferreira-Ross, ''Jonson's Satire of Puritanism in *The Alchemist*,'' *Sydney Studies in English* 17 (1991–92), 38; Jonathan Haynes, ''Representing the Underworld,'' *Studies in Philology* 86, no. 1 (Winter 1989): 35; Alvin Kernan, *The Cankered Muse: Satire of the English Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1962), 174; and John S. Mebane, ''The Renaissance Magus as Mock-Hero: Utopianism and Religious Enthusiasm in Ben Jonson's *The Alchemist*,'' *Renaissance Magic and the Return of the Golden Age: The Occult Tradition and Marlowe, Jonson, and Shakespeare* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 143.

70. Gerard H. Cox, ''Apocalyptic Projection and the Comic Plot of *The Alche-*

mist,'' *English Literary Renaissance*, 13 (Winter 1983): 81. Richard Cave also singles out this performance as ''a virtuosic turn modelled on one of the major *lazzi* for female players in commedia dell'arte.'' See *Ben Jonson and Theatre: Performance, Practice and Theory*, ed. Richard Cave, Elizabeth Schafer, and Brian Woolland, 3 (New York: Routledge, 1999). Sam Mendes, who directed *The Alchemist* for the Royal Shakespeare Company at the Swan in 1991, alternately considers Dol's stint as the Fairy Queen her ''high spot.'' See *Ben Jonson and Theatre*, 83.

71. Herford and Simpson claim that Jonson had been ''a professed Catholic during the previous ten or eleven years'' by the time he wrote *The Alchemist*. '' *The Alchemist*,'' in *Ben Jonson*, vol. 2, 104. Bertil Johansson offers evidence that Jonson was converted to Catholicism after his confinement to Tyburn for killing a fellow actor, Gabriel Spencer—an unpleasant reminder of Jonson's intimate knowledge of the sordid side of the life of the theater. See *Religion and Superstition in the Plays of Ben Jonson and Thomas Middleton,* Essays and Studies on English Language and Literature VII, ed. S. B. Liljegren (New York: Haskell House, 1966), 15.

72. See Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 15, and Frances E. Dolan, *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

73. As Peter Lake writes: ''The list of things satirised by Jonson in the life of the capital—from loose, commercialized sex, conspicuous consumption, the desperate fashion-following, theatre-going, cosmetic-using and general posing of would-be gallants and men and women about town, to the greed, dishonesty and social climbing of artisans and merchants—finds close parallels in the complaint literature and sermons of the godly. Almost the only difference is that in the place reserved for the theatre in the godly's jeremiads against the evils of the city, Jonson tended to put the hypocrisy and subversion of the puritans.'' See *Antichrist's Lewd Hat*, 591.

74. Miles, *Ben Jonson*, 122.

75. Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970), 127 and 146.

76. Dr. Corbet, bishop of Norwich, *Certain Elegant Poems* (London, 1647), 48.

77. *Ben Jonson's Plays and Masques*, Norton Critical Edition, ed. Robert M. Adams (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979), 266 fn. 1.

78. See the introduction for a full discussion of this point, along with Katharine Briggs, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976); Minor White Latham, *The Elizabethan Fairies: The Fairies of Folklore and the Fairies of Shakespeare* (New York: Octagon Books, 1972); Robert Kirk, *The Secret Commonwealth of Elves, Fauns, & Fairies*. ed. Andrew Lang (London: David Nutt, 1893); and Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880).

79. Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c. 1400–c. 1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 338.

80. Joyce Van Dyke also notes the fact that Dapper's cry from within the house is the only thing that prevents Face from convincing Lovewit at the door that nothing is amiss, as does Robert Watson. See van Dyke, '' Game of Wits,'' 268; and Watson, ''*Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy,'' 342 and 358–59.

81. One interesting point about this is that the neighbor in question is a man who was sitting up at night mending his wife's stockings. Such chores were widely believed to be completed in the night by fairies—often by fairies that were gendered male. It is interesting that the lines that set us up for the return to the stage of the Fairy Queen's ''nephew'' are delivered by a man who sits up nights engaged in female domestic work.

82. Jonathan Haynes, ''Representing the Underworld,'' *Studies in Philology* 86, no. 1 (Winter): 40–41.

83. Watson, ''*Alchemist* and Jonson's Conversion of Comedy,'' 365.

Chapter 4. ''Change You, Madam''

All quotations from *Cymbeline* will be taken from the fourth edition of *The Complete Works of Shakespeare,* ed. David Bevington, 4th ed. (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 1434–83. The quotation is taken from I.vi.11.

1. Thomas Rist, *Shakespeare's Romances and the Politics of Counter-Reformation* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 131.

2. In the Folio of 1623, *Cymbeline* is classified as a tragedy although only the evil queen and her loutish son die.

3. See ''Androgyny, Mimesis, and the Marriage of the Boy Heroine on the English Renaissance Stage,'' *PMLA* 102 (1987): 29. Rackin does not read *Cymbeline* as a good example of this phenomenon. She is one of a number of critics who claim that Imogen ''becomes a completely passive figure in her boy's clothes'' without noting the corresponding effeminacy of some of the central male characters. See page 39 fn. 9.

4. See, for example, Naseeb Shaheen, ''The Use of Scripture in *Cymbeline,*'' *Shakespeare Studies* 4 (1968): 294–315. For a specific examination of the historical significance of Imogen and the imagery surrounding her, see Rowena Davies, '''Alone th'Arabian Bird': Imogen as Queen Elizabeth I?'' *Notes and Queries.* 26 (1979): 137–40. For a more general discussion, see Jodi Mikalachki, ''The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 301–22. On the play's uses of mythology, see in particular Peggy Muñoz Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music in Shakespeare's Cymbeline: An Iconographic Reconstruction* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992) and Joan Carr, ''*Cymbeline* and the Validity of Myth,'' *Studies in Philology* 75, no. 3 (Summer 1978): 316–30.

5. Peggy Muñoz Simonds asserts that modern readers, regardless of their scholarly sophistication,

> [n]o longer know how to read Shakespeare as accurately as we should despite the aid of the *Oxford English Dictionary* and multiple editorial footnotes. We do not think as he did . . . we do not read emblem books or even the Bible very much; most of us have not studied the classics in sufficient detail; and we are often unfamiliar with the majority of the traditional *topoi* to which the dramatist so frequently refers. . . . But, without a knowledge of this strange language of images and metaphors based on classical and biblical sources, modern readers are bound to find Shakespeare's texts very difficult indeed to ''understand.''

See Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music,* 14. While I agree with Simonds's assertions so far as they go, I would add fairy lore to the body of sociocultural material that she finds essential to a full analysis of the work of Shakespeare and other early modern playwrights.

6. For example, although Anne Parten finds that even at the end of his career Shakespeare was still coming down on the side of wifely submission, she concedes that

> it is possible to trace in his works an evolution in his concept of the balance of masculine and feminine responsibilities in marriage. . . . Increasing attention is devoted, in the plays

> that deal with marital tensions, to the complex interplay of reciprocal duties that bind husband and wife. . . . Although a wife's voluntary subordination to her husband remains, throughout the Shakespeare canon, the cornerstone of a sound marriage, the plays themselves reflect a steadily growing sensitivity to the demands on an individual that that commitment to submissiveness can make, as well as an increasing sense of the obligations conferred upon the man who accepts that gift of self.

See "Masculine Adultery and Feminine Rejoinders in Shakespeare, Dekker and Sharpham," *Mosaic* 17, no. 1 (Winter 1984), 17.

7. See "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis, 190 (New York: Methuen, 1985).

8. Marilyn Williamson, for example, sees patriarchal ideology as a necessary accompaniment to romance as a genre: "Through reversion to the genre of romance, Shakespeare's last plays mythologize patriarchal power, making its structures seem innocent, making them virtually disappear into a providential cosmos and the most natural of power relationships, the family." See *The Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1986), 112.

9. Sir Philip Sidney, *The Defense of Poesy*, ed. Albert S. Cook, 7, The Athenaeum Press Series, ed. G. L. Kittredge and C. T. Winchester (Chicago: Ginn and Company, 1890).

10. Ibid., 8.

11. Having linked ghosts to any number of "psychological projections" including "fairies, familial spirits, vengeful ghosts, . . . agents of redemption," Stephen Greenblatt avers, "what there is again and again in Shakespeare . . . is a sense that ghosts, real or imagined, are good theater—indeed, that they are good for thinking about theater's capacity to fashion realities, to call realities into question, to tell compelling stories, to puncture the illusions that these stories generate, and to salvage something on the other side of disillusionment." This is precisely the function that fairies serve not only in Shakespeare's plays, but in any number of "fairy plays" from the early modern period. See *Hamlet in Purgatory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), 200. Gary Waller cites *Cymbeline* and its credulity-straining pastoral conclusion in introducing a very positive take on the empowerment of the heroines in Mary Wroth's *Love's Victorie*: "[A]s with Shakespeare's romances, the miracles at the end of *Love's Victory* are as much decided by human, and specifically female, agency as by supernatural intervention." While both plays may reinscribe patriarchal heterosexuality at the end, Waller argues, the fantasy enacted in the plays is one of "mutuality." See "'Like One in a Gay Masque': The Sidney Cousins in the Theaters of Court and Country," in *Readings in Renaissance Women's Drama: Criticism, History, and Performance 1594–1998*, ed. S. P. Cerasono and Marion Wynne-Davies, 244 (New York: Routledge, 1998).

12. Thomas Heywood, *An Apology for Actors*, Garland Series: The English Stage, Attack and Defense 1577–1730, ed. Arthur Freeman, sig. B4 recto (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1973).

13. See the introduction to chapter two for a fuller discussion of this phenomenon.

14. Juliette Wood, "Fairy Bride Tradition in Wales," *Folklore* 103, no. 1 (1992): 56, emph. mine. Carole Silver notes Thomas Keightley's documentation of versions of the tale in France, Scandinavia, and the Shetland Islands, as well as Benjamin Thorpe's identification of "Norwegian, Danish, German, Slavonian, Hindu, Hebrew, Mongol, and Arabian variants." See "'East of the Sun and West of the Moon': Victorians and Fairy Brides," *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 6, no. 2 (Fall 1987): 284 and 296 fn. 3.

15. See Katharine Briggs, *The Anatomy of Puck: An Examination of Fairy Beliefs among Shakespeare's Contemporaries and Successors* (London: Routledge, 1959), and *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), as well as Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, 1968). Peggy Muñoz Simonds links the plot of *Cymbeline* to Apuleius's account (in *The Golden Ass*) of the Cupid and Psyche myth. The points of comparison she details bear striking similarities to the fairy bride tradition as well—a connection Simonds does not make. See Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 85.

16. Wood, "Fairy Bride Tradition in Wales," 57.

17. Maurice Hunt notes that "from at least the time of the late fourteenth-century poem *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*" the pentacle "symbolized divinity." See "Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*," *Studies in Philology* 99, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 427.

18. Katharine Briggs, *The Vanishing People: Fairy Lore and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 108. A mole that matches Imogen's is also used to identify the pseudochangeling Guidererius as the king's true son in the play's final act: "Guiderius had / Upon his neck a mole, a sanguine star; / It was a mark of wonder" (V.v.367–69).

19. Wood, "Fairy Bride Tradition in Wales," 61.

20. See Homer Swander's discussion of the ways in which Imogen provides "the standard by which we judge her husband." See "*Cymbeline*: Religious Idea and Dramatic Design," in *Pacific Coast Studies in Shakespeare*, ed. Waldo F. McNeir and Thelma N. Greenfield, 254 (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1966). Ann Thompson adds that "Imogen's problem is that she is 'worth more' than her husband, a point which is constantly emphasized throughout the play." See "Person and Office: The Case of Imogen, Princess of Britain," in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, 81 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991).

21. Katherine Briggs notes, "This imposition of a taboo is a constant feature in all fairy wife stories and is almost always infringed." See *Vanishing People*, 145.

22. Wood, "Fairy Bride Tradition in Wales," 69, and Jennifer Westwood, *Albion: A Guide to Legendary Britain* (London, Paladin, 1987), 247–48.

23. In addition to Posthumus's reference to it as a manacle, Iachimo refers to it as a "jewel" (II.iv.97). While it could be carved of wood, or constituted of a string of beads, the significance of the prop as a "manacle" would have more force if it were made of metal.

24. The most thorough of these is Stith Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature: A Classification of Narrative Elements in Folktales, Ballads, Myths, Fables, Mediaevel Romances, Exempla, Fabliaux, Jest-Books, and Local Legends* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1956).

25. Richard P. Jenkins, for instance, notes the "numerous cases reported in the oral tradition of people being taken but returning many years later, to the dismay of their families who believed the individual to be dead and buried years before and had restructured their lives accordingly. There are regular references to wives returning only to find their husbands remarried." See "Witches and Fairies: Supernatural Aggression and Deviance among the Irish Peasantry," in *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, ed. Peter Narváez, 317 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1991). Indeed Katharine Briggs takes this state of affairs one tragic step further, noting, "Too hasty a re-marriage is often the cause of failure to rescue a captive in Fairyland." See *Vanishing People*, 109–10. The Irish antiquarian Jeremiah Curtin details "a practice among the fairies (quite common it seems) of carrying away living peo-

ple and leaving substitutes in place of them. It seems that these substitutes are corpses when the persons borne away are marriageable young women. When a married woman is removed a deceased counterfeit is left to take her place.'' See Jeremiah Curtin, *Tales of the Fairies and of the Ghost World Collected from Oral Tradition in South-West Munster* (London: David Nutt, 1895), 23.

26. Meredith Skura, ''Interpreting Posthumus' Dream from Above and Below: Families, Psychoanalysts, and Literary Critics,'' in *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn, 213 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

27. Westwood, *Albion*, 287.

28. Wirt Sikes, *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), 8–9; Lowry Charles Wimberly, *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928); and Diane Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 66, 70, 86, 102, 106–9, 121, 141. Glenn Clark notes the reverence with which James I regarded Milford Haven, and Wales itself, since Henry VII landed there after reuniting England at the conclusion of the Wars of the Roses. Clark adds that the Tudors, too, regarded it ''as their country of origin'' as well as of ''their mythical progenitor Arthur.'' Clark concludes, ''Wales was a virtually sacred geography.'' See ''The 'Strange' Geographies of *Cymbeline*,'' in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan, 247 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998).

29. This line is spoken by Imogen's elder brother, Guiderius (*Cymbeline* IV.ii.219).

30. Marjorie Garber, ''*Cymbeline* and the Languages of Myth,'' *Mosaic* 10, no. 3 (1977), 106–7.

31. Briggs, *Vanishing People*, 84–85.

32. Roger Warren, ed., *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare in Performance, ed. J. R. Mulryne, J. C. Bulman, and Margaret Shewring, 21 (New York: Manchester University Press, 1989). See also Linda Woodbridge's discussion of the inordinate amount of time that Imogen specifically spends sleeping on stage in ''Palisading the Elizabethan Body Politic,'' *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 33, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 335.

33. While numerous other examples will be offered over the course of this chapter, consider, for example, Rhonda Lemke Sanford's judgment that Imogen ''is left with neither a room nor a womb of her own'' in ''A Room Not One's Own: Feminine Geography in *Cymbeline*,'' in *Playing the Globe: Genre and Geography in English Renaissance Drama*, ed. John Gillies and Virginia Mason Vaughan, 81 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998).

34. A noteworthy exception is the analysis of Harriet Walter, who observes that ''Most virginal heroines have little first-hand knowledge of the world, and even less power of choice. Imogen is different. First, she is a Princess. Secondly, she is not a virgin. She is married. . . . Nor is she obedient. She thwarts her father's wishes by marrying Posthumus, and thereby rebels against her King. . . . She seems to have a defiantly independent version of what is right and she sticks to it.'' Walter claims that, among actors, ''Imogen is a coveted role. It is her range that chiefly appeals.'' She goes on deftly to characterize the heroine as ''the smutty rebel child grown into wilful adult with amazon potential.'' See ''Imogen in *Cymbeline*,'' in *Players of Shakespeare 3: Further Essays in Shakespeareian Performance by Players with the Royal Shakespeare Company*, ed. Russell Jackson and Robert Smallwood, 202–4, 213 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

35. Wood, "Fairy Bride Tradition," 63, and W. H. Schofield, "The Lay of Guingamor," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 5 (1896): 236.

36. Clara Claiborne Park, for instance, contrasts Imogen with Rosalind in *As You Like It*, contending that the latter heroine is in control of the action of her play whereas Imogen is not, in "As We Like It: How a Girl Can Be Smart and Still Popular," in *The Woman's Part: Feminist Criticism of Shakespeare* ed. Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely, 107 (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1980). Michael Shapiro asserts that *Cymbeline* constitutes a radical departure from Shakespeare's earlier cross-dressed heroine plays since it "is derived much more directly from the genre of romance, where the heroine in male disguise is usually not so much a cheeky page as a frail and helpless waif." See *Gender in Play on the Shakespearean Stage: Boy Heroines and Female Pages* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 10. See also Janet Adelman, *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet to The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 209.

37. *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington, 1449 fn. 9 (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992). Given the oft-cited lore regarding the vulnerability of both mother and child to fairy abduction immediately post partum, the fact that Posthumus's mother died giving birth to him would also have had a fairy resonance in early modern England.

38. Peter Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath': Speculating on the Boy Actor," in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman, 71 (New York: Routledge, 1992). Murray Schwartz reminds me that this also constitutes a connection between this play and Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. In book 6, canto 12, stanza 7, Pastorella is described as having a "a little purple mold" on her breast. See "Between Fantasy and Imagination: A Psychological Exploration of *Cymbeline*," in *Psychoanalysis and Literary Process* ed. Frederick Crews, 240 fn. 18 (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1970).

39. This line is taken from Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath':" 76.

40. Steve Brown, "The Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines: Notes on Gender Ambiguity in the Sixteenth Century," *Studies in English Literature* 30 (1990), 244–45. See chapter two for a full discussion of the boy Robin and his role in the exploration of gender roles in *The Merry Wives of Windsor*.

41. See "Boyhood of Shakespeare's Heroines," 243–63.

42. Stallybrass, "Transvestism and the 'Body Beneath,'" 76.

43. Michael Shapiro also notes the fact that Imogen "lost both royal identity and female assertiveness even as she adopted male disguise." See *Gender in Play*, 183. See also Catherine Belsey, "Disrupting Sexual Difference: Meaning and Gender in the Comedies," in *Alternative Shakespeares*, ed. John Drakakis, 166–90 (New York: Methuen, 1985); and Ann Thompson, "Person and Office: The Case of Imogen, Princess of Britain," in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, 76–87 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991).

44. Indeed, Carol Thomas Neely makes Posthumus's doubles a specific point of contrast between his character and Imogen's; she contends that unlike Imogen, Posthumus "is protected by his doubles and given the opportunity to change and repent, to act heroically, to have his family restored to him." See *Broken Nuptials in Shakespeare's Plays* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 180. Imogen is protected from detection by the Romans in her disguise as Fidele; she grieves Posthumus's death but makes the decision to go on living; she, too, has her family restored to her far more literally than Posthumus, whose reunion with his family takes place in a dream vision only.

45. Anne Hermann (''Travesty and Transgression, Transvestism in Shakespeare, Brecht, and Churchill,'' *Theatre Journal* 41 [1989], 138) and Joel Fineman (''Fratricide and Cuckoldry: Shakespeare's Doubles,'' *Representing Shakespeare: New Psychoanalytic Essays*, ed. Murray M. Schwartz and Coppélia Kahn, 70–109 [Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980]) discuss the cross-dressed Rosalind as a brother to herself in *As You Like It*.

46. Such an interpretation diverges sharply from Maurice Hunt's view that Imogen's turn as ''the youth Fidele signals her development of a tough endurance culturally associated with manhood.'' Imogen has, in fact, possessed this fortitude all along. See ''The 'Fittings' of *Cymbeline*,'' *South Central Review* 16, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 80.

47. Wood, ''Fairy Bride Tradition,'' 62.

48. See John Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, ed. James Britten, 29–30 (London: W. Satchell, Peyton, and Co., 1881).

49. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith, 682 (1621; New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1941).

50. John Scott Colley observes that ''Imogen's dress in the play is quite significant. Her quest for her lover leads her, symbolically, down the steps of social rank from princess, to franklin's housewife, to a wandering pageboy.'' ''Disguise and New Guise in *Cymbeline*,'' *Shakespeare Studies* 7 (November 1974): 249. Jodi Mikalachki also notes Imogen's status slide but adds the observation that she loses rank in terms of her age, too, noting that Imogen's disguise ''shifts not only her gender, but also her status and age from married adult to single youth.'' ''The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 308. Describing her experience of playing the role of Imogen, Harriet Walter notes, ''She starts by choosing her own roles, but as the play goes on, fate and other people will force her into many disguises. These have narrative justification and function, but on a deeper level they have the quality of metamorphoses. . . . I found it helpful to signpost her journey in terms of these metamorphoses, which simplistically could be labelled thus: Princess/Wife to Princess/Rebel to Franklin's Housewife to Boy/Housewife to Roman Page to Princess/Wife.'' ''Imogen in *Cymbeline*,'' 204.

51. Bruce R. Smith, ''Making a Difference: Male/Male 'Desire' in Tragedy, Comedy, and Tragi-Comedy,'' in *Erotic Politics: Desire on the Renaissance Stage*, ed. Susan Zimmerman, 142 (New York: Routledge, 1992).

52. Murray Schwartz notes that masculine energies are redistributed in Wales among both traditionally masculine and feminine activities, but that the assignment is based on stereotypically male competition: ''In Wales competitive reality consists of hunting tomorrow's feast and deciding who shall play master, cook and servant. It doesn't take a psychologist to see how radically reductive this reinvestment of masculine energies is.'' But perhaps this can be blamed on Belarius, who may revile the court but who retains enough of its rules to continue to impose them on an alternative reality—the only way he has of introducing order into a fundamentally chaotic situation. Schwartz does note that the role of ''housewife'' as Imogen is invited to play it is ''desexualized.'' See ''Between Fantasy and Imagination: A Psychological Exploration of *Cymbeline*,'' in *Psychoanalysis and Literary Process*, ed. Frederick Crews, 257–58 (Cambridge, MA: Winthrop Publishers, Inc., 1970).

53. Neely, *Broken Nuptials*, 181. Maurice Hunt also notes the classless society into which Imogen stumbles in Wales: ''Because they are social nobodies in Wales, their statusless condition allows them to fit ranks and duties to themselves and each other in a liberal, i.e. enfranchising, manner.'' The ''they'' here are Belarius and

the two princes *inconnus*. However, this is also true of Imogen and Posthumus during their time in Wales. See "'Fittings' of *Cymbeline*," 76.

54. Peggy Muñoz Simonds points directly to the medicinal powers that the "savage boys" attribute to Imogen—powers that would be appropriately possessed by a fairy. She notes that although Imogen complains of being sick, "the savage boys see her as a physician who has kept them well through her knowledge of the medicinal qualities of plants or pot-herbs." Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 253. According to Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, "No one needed to be ill who was in their [the fairies'] favor, since the race to which the fairies belonged could 'cause and cure most diseases,' and knew 'the virtues of herbs, plants, stones, minerals, etc. of all creatures, birds, beasts, the four elements, stars, planets' and could 'aptly apply and make use of them'." *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 168.

55. See "*Cymbeline* and the Sudden Blow," *The Upstart Crow* 10 (1990): 103. What Lisa Jardine says of Julia's cross-dressed lamentation in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* is also in keeping with Bruster's analysis of Imogen's paroxysm of grief: "The boy player armed with his arsenal of female characteristics and mannerisms mimes out the acceptable form of heroic womanhood prostrate with grief." See *Still Harping on Daughters: Women and Drama in the Age of Shakespeare* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 33.

56. Robert Kimbrough, "Androgyny Seen through Shakespeare's Disguise," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 33 (1982): 21.

57. Maurice Hunt, "'Stir' and Work in Shakespeare's Last Plays," *Studies in English Literature* 22 (1982): 290. According to Mario DiGangi, "In early modern usage, *effeminacy* refers primarily to *gender*, not sexual deviance: it signifies the absence of 'masculine' reason and self-control." See *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 178 fn. 15.

58. See Robert Kirk, *Secret Commonwealth* (London: Reprinted by James Ballantyne & Co. for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1815), 8–9, and Robert Burton's *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith (1621; New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1941), where fairies are associated with the witches and devils capable of causing melancholy in human beings.

59. Posthumus, Susanne Collier claims, "becomes an androgynous figure: a compromised male who explains his identity as a fallen human exclusively in terms of the assimilation of vicious female characteristics." See "Cutting to the Heart of the Matter: Stabbing the Woman in *Philaster* and *Cymbeline*," in *Shakespearean Power and Punishment: A Volume of Essays*, ed. Gillian Murray Kendall, 45 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1998).

60. Although he has, in fact, fought on the side of the Britons, Posthumus hands himself over to the British troops as a Roman (V.iii.89–91). Remember that he thinks his wife dead and is, in any case, still under banishment.

61. When Iachimo, lying, tells Imogen that Posthumus has been living it up with Italian courtesans, the perplexed princess muses, "When he was here / He did incline to sadness, and ofttimes / Not knowing why" (I.vi.61–63). For the fairy significance of melancholy, see my discussion of Imogen's burial scene earlier.

62. Alexander Leggatt contends that the contrast between Imogen's dreamlike experience in the tomb and Posthumus's dream vision points up a similar contrast in the quality of the two as characters. He wakes up to find a tablet confirming the truth of the whole self-affirming experience, quite unlike Imogen, who wakes to find herself confronted with the leader of the invading Roman army. Leggatt concludes: "Imogen's vision presents the play's ultimate horror and its ultimate unreality; Posthumus' vision reveals the source of its ultimate order and comfort." See

"The Island of Miracles: An Approach to *Cymbeline*," *Shakespeare Studies* 10 (Spring 1978): 203.

63. See "*Cymbeline* and the Languages of Myth," *Mosaic* 10, no. 3 (1977), 106. Meredith Skura also notes the moral dimension to the real world/dream world dichotomy explored in *Cymbeline*, reading the play as one that breaks down the dichotomy "conscious" and "unconscious" to reveal instead "a range of different ways of being aware." See "Interpreting Posthumus' Dream from Above and Below," 204. See also David Solway, "Intoxicated Words," *The Sewanee Review* 95, no. 4 (Fall 1987): 619–25; Léone Teyssandier, "Transformation et Metamorphose dans *Cymbeline*," *Différence et Identité*, Centre Aixois de Recherches Anglaises 12 (Provence: Publications de l'Université de Provence, 1992), 121–30; and Nancy Hayles, "Sexual Disguise in *Cymbeline*," *Modern Language Quarterly* 41 (1980): 231–47.

64. See "Contract and Conscience in *Cymbeline*," *Renaissance Drama* 25 (1994), 48.

65. Maurice Hunt draws an analogy between the function of Wales as a locale in the plot and the more traditional green world escape in comedies such as *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, where, as we have seen, fairies often serve as guardians of "a natural place wherein characters assume new identities, experiment with them, and generally play-act in ways that have salutary effects on a more permanent, courtly self." See "'Fittings' of *Cymbeline*," 75.

66. See *Cymbeline*, Shakespeare in Performance, 10. Warren defers to textual analyses that consider *Imogen* a misprint for *Innogen*, the name in Holinshed's *Chronicles*; he uses *Giacomo* as a more logical form of Iachimo's name (given the early modern typographical substitution of *I* for *J*).

67. A number of critics make this claim, including Murray Schwartz, who asserts that "The play releases dangers in order to pattern them; it self-consciously affirms the hierarchic boundaries designed to master threats which the traditional roles generate." See "Between Fantasy and Imagination: A Psychological Exploration of *Cymbeline*," in *Psychoanalysis and Literary Process*, 220.

68. As Diane Purkiss notes, "[F]or the English, in particular, fairies were part of the growing enterprise culture of Elizabethan England." See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 124.

69. See Leah Marcus, "*Cymbeline* and the Unease of Topicality," in *The Historical Renaissance: New Essays on Tudor and Stuart Literature and Culture*, ed. Heather Dubrow and Richard Strier, 152 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988).

70. See Marco Mincoff, *Things Supernatural and Causeless: Shakespearean Romance* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1992), 51.

71. Ibid., 51, emph. added. Interestingly enough, when the trio emerge from their cave to battle the Romans, they are likened to angels, just as Belarius identified Imogen as an angel upon first seeing her in his cave: "Tis thought the old man and his sons were angels" (V.iii.85).

72. For instance, Durant Hotham reports that while tending cattle as a boy, the young Jacob Behmen found "a little stony crag hard by, call'd the Lands Crown, where the natural situation of the Rock had made a seeming inclosure of some part of the Mountain, finding an entrance into it, he went in." Upon entering, Jacob found fairy treasure. See *The Life of Jacob Behmen* (London, 1654), sig. 61 recto and Katharine Briggs, *Vanishing People*, 81–91.

73. Aubrey, *Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme*, 30.

74. See *Children of the Revels: The Boy Companies of Shakespeare's Time and Their Plays*, 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 243. Nasreeb Shaheen

links music and myth in the romances, noting that these plays "give increased prominence to music and . . . have more myth than do most of Shakespeare's plays, and the myth haunts the reader with the suggestion that there is a hidden meaning to be found." See "The Use of Scripture in *Cymbeline*," *Shakespeare Studies* 4 (1968), 294. Finally, Peggy Muñoz Simonds notes the abundance of ritualized dance, music, and poetry in *Cymbeline* without noting that these, too, are all either attributes of the fairies themselves or gifts that they are capable of bestowing. See Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 294.

75. Perhaps not incidentally this constitutes another gender inversion, of sorts, in the play since it is a male character who recounts this story of infants mysteriously stolen in the night, just as the man who performs the theft, Belarius, becomes the entertaining tale teller for the two princes over their evening fire. Helen Hackett notes this as a curiosity of all of Shakespeare's late plays. See "'Gracious Be the Issue': Maternity and Narrative in Shakespeare's Late Plays," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles, 37 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

76. Janet Adelman has a negative view of Belarius's performance of roles socially coded as feminine. Writing about Guiderius and Arviragus, she concludes, "Their mother virtually unmentioned, their nurse dead, reared by a male substitute for her, the princes come close to realizing a safe version of Posthumus's parthenogenesis fantasy." *Suffocating Mothers*, 204.

77. As Maurice Hunt notes in an article tracing out the play's deployment of Pauline doctrine regarding the body of Christ in an analysis of the body politic, "It is as though the play's protagonist has grown a boorish Cloten within himself." See "Dismemberment, Corporal Reconstitution, and the Body Politic in *Cymbeline*," *Studies in Philology* 99, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 416–17. See also "'Fittings' of *Cymbeline*," 86 fn. 31, where he suggests that "Posthumus and Cloten's roles may have originally been doubled by the same actor."

78. "The Pastoral Reckoning in 'Cymbeline,'" *Shakespeare Survey* 36 (Spring 1984): 97.

79. "*Cymbeline* and the Sudden Blow," 109.

80. For discussion of the incidence of domestic violence in early modern England, see Lynda Boose, "Scolding Brides and Bridling Scolds: Taming the Woman's Unruly Member," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1991): 179–213; Frances Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994); Martin Ingram, *Church Courts, Sex and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 143–44 and 180–85; and B. J. and Mary Sokol, *Shakespeare, Law and Marriage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 129–38.

81. Simonds, *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 248 and 256. Janet Adelman regards this as yet further elision of the feminine principle in the play: "That even Imogen is recovered first as a son underscores the extent to which the renewed family of the last scene is male." See *Suffocating Mothers*, 203.

82. Valerie Wayne views the postbattle fatigue of all of the characters in this scene as a leveling element consistent with the play's overall class critique. "In this final scene," she writes, "most of the characters are looking pretty ragged. . . . in many productions everyone who has engaged in the fight shows signs of blood and dirt." This leads Wayne to the conclusion that "Nearly everyone except Cymbeline in the last tableau looks base rather than noble, as if the events of the play have reduced them to their lowest common denominator." See "The Woman's Parts of *Cymbeline*," in *Staged Properties in Early Modern English Drama*, ed. Jonathan Gil Harris and Natasha Korda, 302–3 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

83. See Briggs, *Encyclopedia of Fairies*, 296.

84. In Peggy Muñoz Simonds's view: "not only does *Cymbeline* look forward to the birth of Christ, but it also reminds its audience of the later schism between the worshippers of Christ and of the presumed moral superiority of the reformed church in England and Germany over the luxurious Roman church of the south." See *Myth, Emblem, and Music*, 226–27.

85. "Shakespeare and Romance," *Later Shakespeare*, Stratford-Upon-Avon Studies 8 (London: Edward Arnold [Publishers] Ltd., 1966), 49 and 76.

86. See *Shakespeare and the Nature of Woman*, 2nd ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1996), 233.

87. Jodi Mikalachki quite rightly points out that "Imogen never regains the visual trappings of her femininity" at the conclusion of the play. However, this leads her to conclude that the feminine has been totally subordinated to the masculine at the play's close: "To the extent that she reemerges as a respectable ideal at the end of the play, it is through a series of alliances with the male characters, British and Roman, from whom she derives her identity. Cymbeline's daughter, Posthumus's wife, the princes' sister, and the servant of Lucius. . . . These bonds emphasize the necessary subordination of the feminine within the patriarchal structures of marriage and empire. The fact that Imogen reestablishes these bonds while still in her boy's disguise indicates the degree of anxiety about female power to destroy them." See "The Masculine Romance of Roman Britain: *Cymbeline* and Early Modern English Nationalism," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 46, no. 3 (Fall 1995): 321. Again, what this fails to recognize are the aspects of femininity that appear in the men in the play's final scenes. I read the final scene as more of a trade-off—a sharing—of masculine and feminine principles than a takoever of the latter by the former. Janet Adelman contends that "In effect, Cymbeline celebrates his triumphant separation from the mother's power by appropriating that power for himself, consolidating his own power by claiming to absorb hers." See *Suffocating Mothers*, 203. See also Ann Thompson, "Person and Office: The Case of Imogen, Princess of Britain" in *Literature and Nationalism*, ed. Vincent Newey and Ann Thompson, 76–87 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1991); and Williamson, *Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies*, 147–48, 153.

88. See *Patriarchy of Shakespeare's Comedies*, 154–55. For another favorable reading of the play's gender role ambiguity, see Teyssandier, "Transformation et Metamorphose dans *Cymbeline*," 121–30.

89. Thomas Rist, *Shakespeare's Romances and the Politics of Counter-Reformation* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1999), 118. Rist goes on to link superstition and Catholicism, a connection also forged by Richard Strier in "Shakespeare and the Skeptics," *Religion and Literature* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2000): 171–96.

90. See Willy Maley, "Postcolonial Shakespeare: British Identity Formation and *Cymbeline*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles, 154 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

Chapter 5. The Fairy Defense

1. *An account of one Ann Jeffries, now living in the County of Cornwall* (London: Printed for Richard Cumberland, 1696), 10–11. The text is available on microfilm in the Early English Books series and is reprised in J. Morgan, *Phoenix Brittanicus*, vol. I (London, 1732), and Joseph Ritson, *Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances Illustrating Shakespeare and Other Early English Writers* (London: Frank & William Kerslake,

1875), 343–48, and in John Brand, M.A., *Observations on the Popular Antiquities of Great Britain: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar and Provincial Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions*, 3rd ed., rev. by Sir Henry Ellis, Vol. II (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1849). A highly romanticized version of Jeffries's story appears in Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England: The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, 3rd ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 127–29, discussed later. Katherine Briggs relies heavily on Hunt's version in her account of Jeffries's case in *British Folktales* (New York: Dorset Press, 1988), 152–53. Finally, significant details from letters written contemporaneously with Jeffries's fairy interactions and her subsequent trial appear in B. C. Spooner's *John Tregagle: Alive or Dead*, ed. Theo Brown, West Country Folklore No. 13 (St. Peter Port: Toucan Press, 1979), and in Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History: Early Modern and Twentieth-Century Representations* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 161–62.

2. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 12.

3. Ibid., 12–13.

4. Ibid., 14.

5. Ibid.

6. Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 200.

7. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 15–16.

8. Ibid., 16.

9. In a similar vein, Keith Thomas reports that "the Somerset wise woman, Joan Tyrry, admitted in 1555: the fairies 'taught her such knowledge that she getteth her living by it'." See *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 248.

10. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 16–18.

11. Qtd. in Spooner's *John Tregagle*, 8; see also Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 161.

12. Evidence exists, however, that fairy belief continued to be used in anti-Catholic propaganda in the British Civil War period and beyond. Richard Bovet, for instance, in *Pandaemonium, or the Devil's Cloyster, being a further blow to modern Sadduceism, proving the existence of witches and spirits* (London 1684), quotes at length from *Saul and Samuel at Endor* to refute the validity of the miracles claimed by Roman Catholicism. In one particular instance phenomena such as visitations by the Virgin Mary are likened to " 'sports and pranks, as can become but Fairies, and Hobgoblins.' " Qtd. in Bovet, 134.

13. Reproduced in Joseph Ritson, *Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances Illustrating Shakespeare and Other Early English Writers* (London: Frank & William Kerslake, 1875), 327.

14. Ibid., 325.

15. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 19.

16. See Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witchcraft.* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617), 228. Michael MacDonald makes the important observation that "In an age when demons and fairies, witches and their familiars, were the visible companions of sober husbandmen, ministers, and gentlefolk, it was not mad delusion to see the unseen world. But Protestants of every stripe agreed that to invoke it was profoundly wrong. Satan, the master of protean illusions, was the author of angelic forms; the men who raised such apparitions, even for pious purposes, were the worst kind of witches." See *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 18–19. The identification of Satan as the master of protean illusion is significant for both fairy belief and socioreligious attitudes toward actors and the theater.

17. See James I, *Daemonologie*, The English Experience: Its Record in Early

Printed Books Published in Facsimile, no. 94 (1597; reprint, New York: Da Capo Press, Theatrum Orbis Terrarum Ltd., 1969), "To the Reader." Although James I ultimately back-pedaled from his former vehement condemnation of witches and witchcraft, understanding the possibility of fabrication, the *Daemonologie* remained in print and available, and many continued to regard it as representative of James's views. So, for example, John Stearne rails on those of his own day who are prepared to excuse the activities of "white witches," "of whom his late Majesty of famous renowne in his Demonologie giveth a dreadful censure, who saith that they are to be dealt withal, as with Socerers [*sic*], and especially the curing witch, commonly called the good witch." See *A Confirmation and Discovery of Witchcraft* . . . (London: William Wilson, 1648), sigs. A2 verso–A3 recto.

18. For full discussion of these cases, see Diane Purkiss, "Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen," in *"This Double Voice": Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 103–22 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000).

19. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 20.

20. Ibid.

21. See Spooner, *John Tregagle*, 8.

22. See Purkiss, *The Witch in History*, 161.

23. See Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 20–23.

24. See Spooner, *John Tregagle*, 9.

25. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 22. Patricia Crawford provides numerous examples to demonstrate that the 1640s was a period marked by much religiopolitical agitation among women, both in print and in public. See *Women and Religion in England, 1500–1720* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 134. It is during this period that Ann Jeffries was healing people with fairy powers and making prophecies about the state of both politics and religion in England under fairy advisement. However, after the Restoration, religious grandstanding once again became dangerous for both women and men, but particularly for women, since social pressures acted to restrain their participation in the public sphere generally. This social reality, coupled with her unpleasant experience in Bodmin jail, might explain why Ann Jeffries was so reluctant to discuss her experiences with Moses Pitt in the 1690s.

26. For another ultimately successful use of the fairy defense, see Annabel Gregory's account of Susan Swapper in "Witchcraft, Politics, and 'Good Neighborhood' in Early Seventeenth-Century Rye," *Past and Present* 133 (November 1991): 31–66.

27. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 3 and 9.

28. Barbara Rosen helpfully outlines the key players in the publication of the Walsh account, along with their likely sympathies. See Barbara Rosen, ed. *Witchcraft*, The Stratford-Upon-Avon Library 6 (London: Edward Arnold, 1969), 64. In addition, Diane Purkiss discusses Walsh's case in *At the Bottom of the Garden: A Dark History of Fairies, Hobgoblins, and Other Troublesome Things* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 139–41.

29. Keith Thomas discusses the fact that some Protestant theologians blamed Catholics for the promulgation of fairy belief but notes the injustice of this accusation, since Catholic divines also opposed continued belief in fairies. See *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), 610–11, and Marie B. Rowlands, "Recusant Women 1560–1640," *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, ed. Mary Prior, 149–80 (New York: Methuen, 1985).

30. H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), 141. See also Peter Haining's brief synopsis of the progression of

witchcraft legislation in England: "The first English Witchcraft Statute was introduced in 1542 by Henry VIII and then repealed in 1547. In 1563 it was reintroduced by Queen Elizabeth I, only to be repealed and replaced with a still more severe charter by James I in 1604. This subsequent law remained untouched on the Statute Books until 1736." Haining adds that Elizabeth's statute of 1563 "called for the death penalty [hanging] for murder by sorcery and a year's imprisonment for witchcraft 'not deadly.'" In 1604, James I "had Parliament pass a new Witchcraft Act which was considerably more severe than that of Elizabeth—widening the range of offences for which death was the penalty." See *The Witchcraft Papers: Contemporary Records of the Witchcraft Hysteria in Essex, 1560–1700*, ed. Peter Haining (London: Robert Hale & Company, 1974), 18, 23, 111.

31. See *Daemonologie*, 75. Although she is speaking of the work's probable influence on *The Tempest*, Jacqueline E. M. Latham makes a cogent case for Shakespeare's knowledge of the *Daemonologie*. She reasons, "Contemporary beliefs about devils could, of course, be found elsewhere, but James's relationship to Shakespeare as patron of the King's Men, the clarity and dialectical skill of his *Daemonologie* as well as its content make the King's famous work a likely source for some of the ideas of Shakespeare's strange play." See "'The Tempest' and King James's 'Daemonologie,'" *Shakespeare Survey* 28 (1975), 117.

32. See Ritson, *Fairy Tales, Legends and Romances*, 16.

33. Keith Thomas traces institutional religion's hostility to fairy belief back to the Middle Ages, when ecclesiastics objected to efforts to pacify the spirits in hopes of either deterring harm or garnering rewards, since that constituted the establishment of rival deities to God. He continues: "This hostility was strengthened by the Reformation, whose theologians took away the remaining possibility that fairies might be the ghosts of the dead. Fairies could only be good or evil spirits, and of the two possibilities the latter was much more likely. . . . This was the official doctrine of most Protestant teachers, though like so many other official doctrines its influence upon the people at large was only partial." See *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, 610.

34. See Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, title page. Walsh, though convicted, does not disprove this claim since he ultimately succumbs to unconscionably leading questioning eventually adopting the "familiar spirit" terminology of his interlocuter in lieu of his initial insistence on fairies as the origin of his healing powers. See *The Examination of John Walsh before Maister Thomas Williams, Commissary to the Reverend father in God William bishop of Exeter, upon certayne Interrogatories touchyng Wytchcrafte and Sorcerye, in the presence of divers gentlemen and others* (London: John Awdely, 1566), available on microfilm from the University of Michigan, and in *Witchcraft in England, 1558–1618*, ed. Barbara Rosen (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1969), 64–71.

35. See Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970), 121.

36. Ibid.

37. See Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 216.

38. The quote in the section head is Lafew's description of Helena (II.i.80). Lafew is the servant who helps Helena persuade the King of France to make a trial of her healing powers. This and all other quotations from the play will be taken from *The Complete Works of Shakespeare*, 4th ed., ed. David Bevington, 362–403 (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992).

39. Although I use the same textual features (Helena's healing abilities and her success in meeting Bertram's demands) to make the argument, I am drawing on a

different set of cultural associations than W. W. Lawrence, the first to trace the main character traits and plot points in *All's Well* to their roots in popular lore. In Helena, he sees an echo of the Clever Wench popularized in such medieval tales as the story of Patient Griselda. Helena's cleverness serves her in good stead in the first traditional plot strand Lawrence identifies in the play, the Healing of the King. Her inherent wit surfaces again in her ability to satisfy the requirements imposed by the second plot point that Shakespeare appropriated from popular tradition in Lawrence's view, the Fulfillment of the Tasks. The tasks in question are, of course, getting Bertram's family ring and a child of his body. See *Shakespeare's Problem Comedies*, 2nd ed. (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1931), 47–50, 55–60.

40. McCandless goes on to conclude that the play leaves Bertram and Helena as ''subject-in-process, active agents inextricably engaged with subjugating myths of gender.'' . . . Both characters aim to ground themselves in genders that the play suggests are groundless—or at least unstable, fluid, performative.'' See ''Helena's Bed-trick: Gender and Performance in *All's Well That Ends Well*,'' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 45, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 453, 468. To return again to a formulation that has served as an important touchstone throughout this project, fairy lore and popular invocations of it typically problematize the social situation, offering alternatives to the existing order, but no solutions.

41. As Nicholas Marsh puts it, ''We call Helena's project 'political' because it runs counter to social conventions of which she is only too well aware.'' See *Shakespeare: Three Problem Plays*, ed. Nicholas Marsh, Analysing Texts Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 139.

42. See Christopher Marsh, *Popular Religion in Sixteenth-Century England*, Social History in Perspective, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 145.

43. The line in the section head occurs at II.i.174.

44. Later, Helena tells the Widow and Diana, ''I am supposèd dead'' (IV.iv.11), but there is never an on-stage explanation for why that is the case. In a bizarre passage, the First Lord of Dumaine tells the soldiers that Helena died at St. Jaques le Grand. When asked how he knows this, he makes the odd statement ''The stronger part of it by her own letters, which makes her story true even to the point of her death. Her death itself, which could not be her office to say is come, was faithfully confirmed by the rector of the place'' (IV.iii.54–57). How did Helena persuade the rector of a Catholic shrine to lie for her? That is, unfortunately, a question that the play leaves unasked and unanswered.

45. I discuss this aspect of the play more fully in my essay '' 'As Sweet as Sharp': Helena and the Fairy Bride Tradition,'' forthcoming in an essay collection devoted to *All's Well* edited by Gary Waller for Routledge. For examples of such tales, see Sir Walter Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 2nd ed. (New York: The Citadel Press, 1970), 140–42; ''Fairy,'' *Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend*, 3rd ed. (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972), and Katherine Briggs, *An Encyclopedia of Fairies* (New York: Pantheon, 1976), 125–27, 135–37; *Fairies in Tradition and Literature* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 123–29; and *The Vanishing People: Fairy Lore and Legends* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978), 105–10.

46. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 10.

47. Peirsoun professes that ''she had friends in that court which was of her own blood, who had good acquaintance of the Queen of Elfame, which might have helped her.'' See R. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland.* (Edinburgh, 1833), 162.

48. Scott, *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft*, 108. The Pitcairn account, which succeeds Sir Walter Scott's, does not include this information and Scott, unfortunately, does not indicate his source for these extremely interesting details.

49. Dolora Cunningham offers a similar catalog of Helena's superwoman selling points. See "Conflicting Images of the Comic Heroine," in *"Bad" Shakespeare: Revaluations of the Shakespeare Canon*, ed. Maurice Charney, 120–29 (Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1988).

50. Gareth Roberts writes eloquently about the creepily ambiguous nature of what Helena does in curing the King: "Helena inherits from her father an art that rivals and surpasses nature and which puts life into the lifeless. . . . Rosalind, Helena and Paulina produce their wonderful effects by accessing the skill of an absent male artist with almost miraculous powers, and in the later two later plays this is manifested as the raising of the dead, a sort of necromancy." See "'An Art Lawful as Eating'?: Magic in *The Tempest* and *The Winter's Tale*," in *Shakespeare's Late Plays: New Readings*, ed. Jennifer Richards and James Knowles, 131 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999).

51. See Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 10.

52. For an insightful reading of the role that the Countess plays in Helena's pursuit of Bertram, see Mary Beth Rose, "Where Are the Mothers in Shakespeare? Options for Gender Representation in the English Renaissance," *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 42, no. 3 (Fall 1991): 291–314.

53. See Marliss C. Desens, *The Bed-Trick in English Renaissance Drama: Explorations in Gender, Sexuality, and Power* (Newark: Delaware University Press, 1994).

54. As Helen Wilcox notes: "Shakespearean tragicomedy, therefore, not only presents a remarkable array of characters and concerns which are close to the matter of mothering, but also finds its patterns of action, language, metaphor and resolution in motherhood, drawing on ideas of maternity in nature, society, royal images and ordinary female experience. . . . Thus it is entirely apt that maternity should epitomize the paradoxical complexity of the tragic/comic mix in these plays, and exemplify a genre which brings both death and new life into its cycle of action." See "Gender and Genre in Shakespeare's Tragicomedies," in *Reclamations of Shakespeare*, ed. A. J. Hoenselaars, 137 (Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994).

55. See chapter four for a discussion of the association of hills with fairy dwellings, likely linked via the association of fairies and the dead (if one thinks of hills in terms of burial mounds). Lowry Charles Wimberly links this association to the fact that, in balladry, witches and fairies alike are depicted as opulent beings, noting: "The riches housed in ancestral graves suggest, of course, an origin for the belief that underground fairies are wealthy. In Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and Brittany the dead, like fairies, are guardians of hidden treasure." See *Folklore in the English and Scottish Ballads* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1928), 182.

56. See John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, in *Masterpieces of the English Drama*, ed. Felix E. Schelling, I.ii.101–5 (Chicago: American Book Company, 1912).

57. Ibid., II.iii.83–84.

58. See Frances Dolan, *Dangerous Familiars: Representations of Domestic Crime in England, 1550–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 215.

59. Richard Levin is among the critics who see Helena in this way. He mounts a ferocious attack on Helena and her deceitfulness that is based almost entirely on wild, extratextual suppositions about the implications of her behavior, concluding that Helena "chafes at the cultural restrictions placed on a young woman." See "*All's Well That Ends Well*, and 'All Seems Well,'" *Shakespeare Studies* 13 (1980), 132, as well as Nicholas Marsh's assessment that "Helena's final masterstroke is her demand. She has been every variety of female stereotype by turns. She has puffed him [the King] up with her weakness, scolded him maternally, used the voice of God, excited him with witchcraft and forbidden sexuality: in short, she has flattered and

bamboozled him beyond his knowledge.'' Marsh's observations appear in *Shakespeare: Three Problem Plays*, 92.

60. Mahlon Myron Gowdy, *A Family History*, ed. G. T. Ridlon Sr., 219 (Lewiston, ME: Journal Press, 1919).

61. Pitcairn, *Ancient Criminal Trials in Scotland*, 614. For further discussion of Gowdie's complex case, see Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 112–14, and ''Old Wives' Tales Retold: The Mutations of the Fairy Queen,'' in ''*This Double Voice*'': *Gendered Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. Danielle Clarke and Elizabeth Clarke, 103–22 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), along with Emma Wilby, ''The Witch's Familiar and the Fairy in Early Modern England and Scotland,'' *Folklore* 111 (2000): 283–305. Wilby makes the fascinating claim that the difference between those who practiced witchcraft with fairies and those who used demonic familiars was that ''the definition of the spirits was up to the human. In other words, the human could choose to employ the same fairy to either good or evil ends, suggesting that it was the moral position of the spirit's user, rather than of the spirit itself, which determined the spirit's moral status at any given time.'' See 299.

62. See Lisa Jardine, ''Cultural Confusion and Shakespeare's Learned Heroines: 'These Are Old Paradoxes,''' *Shakespeare Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (Spring 1987): 10.

63. See Richard Wilson, ''Observations on English Bodies: Licensing Maternity in Shakespeare's Late Plays,'' in *Enclosure Acts: Sexuality, Property, and Culture in Early Modern England*, ed. Richard Burt and John Michael Archer, 129 (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

64. See *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor: A Medieval Guide to the Arts*, trans. by Jerome Taylor (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), 14. This medieval (circa 1120) text would have been well known in Shakespeare's era, according to Taylor.

65. Pitt, *An account of one Ann Jeffries*, 10.

66. Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, ed. Floyd Dell and Paul Jordan-Smith, 383 (1621; reprint, New York: Tudor Publishing Company, 1941); and Thomas Cooper, *The Mystery of Witchcraft* (London: Nicholas Okes, 1617), 218–19. For contemporary comment on the early modern belief that there was little distinction between white, beneficent magic and black, evil magic, see Brian P. Levack, *The Witch-Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 2nd ed. (New York: Longman, 1995), 11 fn. 14; Thomas, *Religion and Decline of Magic*, 257, 266, and 435–49; H. R. Trevor-Roper, *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries and Other Essays*, 6th ed. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967), 142–43; and Alan Macfarlane, *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England: A Regional and Comparative Study* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1971), 3–4, 67, 126–34 and 310–12.

67. James Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or The Happy Deliverie of Women* (London, 1612), 82.

68. See Richard K. Stensgaard, ''*All's Well That Ends Well* and the Galenico-Paracelsian Controversy,'' *Renaissance Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (1972): 174. Stensgaard argues that Helena emerges as a Paracelsian. For a contradictory view of Helena as neither a Galenist nor a Paracelsian, but a hermeticist, see Henry D. Janowitz,''Helena's Medicine in *All's Well That Ends Well*: Is It Paracelsian or Hermetical in Origin?'' *Cauda Pavonis: The Hermetic Text Society Newsletter* 20, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 20–22.

69. Stensgaard, ''*All's Well That Ends Well*,'' 180–81. Suzanne Hull usefully outlines the role of the church (as well as the institutionalization of medical education through the universities) in eroding the role played by early modern cunning women in health care, including midwifery, discussed later: ''Until the sixteenth century, physicians were drawn from the ranks of priests, monks, and other ecclesi-

astics. But as humanistic thought spread after the Reformation, medical practice became separated from the church and the new kind of lay physician emerged. Unfortunately, the doctors' major achievement in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was not in advancing medical knowledge but rather in organizing themselves into a professional association to keep out those whom they found unsuitable. The unqualified included barbers, surgeons, apothecaries, midwives, housewives, 'wise women,' and others whom were now lumped under the category of quacks.'' See Suzanne W. Hull, *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women* (Walnut Creek, CA: Altamira Press, 1996), 56.

70. See *Four Treatises of Theophrastus von Hohenheim, called Paracelsu*s, ed. Henry E. Sigerist, 240–43 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1941).

71. Stensgaard also reads the passage in this way; ''*All's Well That Ends Well*,'' 179–80.

72. Ibid., 182–83.

73. See *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 120–30. The quote appears on page 126.

74. See, for example, Marion Gibson's discussion of the revenge narrative as manifested in early modern witchcraft accounts in *Reading Witchcraft: Stories of Early English Witches* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 94–101.

75. John Fletcher, *The Faithful Shepherdess*, in *Masterpieces of the English Drama*, ed. Felix E. Schelling, I.i.110–19 (Chicago: American Book Company, 1912).

76. Diane Purkiss argues that if fairies can be seen as subversive figures, they can equally well be seen ''as a means not of breaking rules, but of making rules, particularly for women, and this too is seized on eagerly by an élite eager to get their money's worth out of their servants.'' See *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 164.

77. Carolyn Asp points out the provocative inversion of gender norms inherent in Helena's health-for-husband deal: ''This request, which depends upon patriarchal power for its implementation, paradoxically subverts the very order of patriarchy itself. . . . The king's debt to Helena is reckoned in Bertram's flesh; he must become the sexual partner to her to whom he is 'owed' as the reward for the restoration of the king's flesh. Bertram resists this structural 'feminization,' loudly voicing the resentment that accompanies objectification, a resentment that arises from having been given no choice.'' See ''Subjectivity, Desire and Female Friendship in *All's Well That Ends Well*,'' *Literature and Psychology* 32, no. 4 (1986): 54.

78. Here, as in all of the witchcraft narratives to which I have had occasion to refer over the course of this study, it is important to bear in mind Frances Dolan's admonition to ''view court records as themselves representations, shaped by occasion and convention, rather than as standards against which to check the accuracy of, say, plays. Published accounts of trials can stand as one example of how indistinguishable are 'documents' and 'representations.' Multiple narratives about the most notorious crimes and trials survive, each inflected by its author, its authorization, its intended audience, its timing. Yet we do not have 'transcripts'; that is, official, exhaustive manuscript accounts that purport to record verbatim what happened in the courtroom.'' See *Whores of Babylon: Catholicism, Gender, and Seventeenth-Century Print Culture* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 2.

79. See Robert Hunt, *Popular Romances of the West of England: The Drolls, Traditions, and Superstitions of Old Cornwall*, 3rd ed. (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1968), 128–29.

80. Purkiss, *At the Bottom of the Garden*, 124. See also Wendy Wall's wry comment that ''As industrious workers, fairies did not simply constitute the ignorant belief system against which humanists liked to tilt, for they began to be associated with

(even as they eroticized) the values of stewardship, diligence, and *oeconomia* so dear to the 'middling sort.' See *Staging Domesticity: Household Work and English Identity in Early Modern Drama* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 102.

81. The *Malleus Maleficarum*, for example, identifies Diana as one of the ringleaders of nighttime rides on flying demon-beasts with whole companies of witches. See *Malleus Maleficarum,* trans. Reverend Montague Summers, (London: John Rodker, 1928), 104. Robert Morton collapses fairies, witches, and Diana into a ring, averring that the fairy circles believed to be left by dancing fairies might also be conjuring circles for witches, adding that such dances have commonly been alluded to since antiquity as "*Dianae ludos*, the sports of Diana." See *The Natural History of Stafford-shire* (Oxford, 1686), Folio 11, sig. B2 recto. Also interesting is the fact that the Countess D'Aulnoi's fairy tale "Fortunio" (printed in English in 1707) suggests that Diana can be easily mistaken for a fairy: "A fairy appear'd so richly clad, that he [Fortunio] had never seen anything like her. He was about to prostrate himself, so much the Majestick Air of that Lady had inspir'd him with respect. She had a Hunting Habit on that hung about her like a Scarf, which might have occasion'd her to have been taken for *Diana*, had she not discover'd herself to be a Fairy that had her Palace in the midst of the Forrest." See *The Diverting Works of the Countess D'Anois, Author of the Ladies Travels to Spain*, (London, 1707), 594.

82. The King echoes Helena's vision of love as religion in the husband-choosing scene, when he tells the intransigent Bertram, "As thou lov'st her, / Thy love's to me religious; else, does err" (II.iii.182–83).

83. See Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 167.

84. For an alternate reading of what is going on here that is considerably more generous to Helena, see Maurice Hunt, "Helena and the Reformation Problem of Merit in *All's Well That Ends Well*," in *Shakespeare and the Culture of Christianity in Early Modern England*, ed. Dennis Taylor and David N. Beauregard, 350–51 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

85. King James I had specific ties to the shrine Helena visits. Willem Schrickx notes that "The patron saint of Spain was St. James the Apostle, a fact generally known at the time." Capitalizing on this connection, "On one occasion the King had even planned a significant event in his life, namely that of his coronation, to coincide with the day of St. James the Apostle"—July 25. James was actually crowned on July 23, 1603. As Schrickx goes on to note, "not only was St. James the patron of Spain, he was extensively commemorated at the church of Santiago de Compostela." See "*All's Well That Ends Well* and Its Historical Relevance," in *Multiple Worlds, Multiple Words: Essays in Honor of Irène Simon*, ed. Hena Maes-Jelinek, Pierre Michel, and Paulette Michel-Michot, 261–62 (Liège: University of Liège, 1987).

86. David Palmer, "Comedy and the Protestant Spirit in *All's Well That Ends Well*," *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 71, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 104. Maurice Hunt helpfully details the various pointers in the play to Catholicism, which include the play's setting in France and Italy; Lafew's use of Helena's cure of the King as evidence "that miracles have not ceased, that in fact 'modern' persons wrongly explain away present miraculous happenings," in which Lafew "represents a Counter-Reformation Catholic viewpoint"; Helena's pilgrimage; and, finally, the Countess's suggestion that Bertram is a lost spiritual cause unless Helena intervenes for him with God, which casts Helena in "the Marian role of intercessor." See "Helena and the Reformation Problem of Merit," 344–49. See also David Beauregard's compelling reading of the play as evidence that Shakespeare "appears to fit the profile of a discreet 'church papist,' more than that of a

devout member of the Church of England or a secularized skeptic'' in '' 'Inspired Merit': Shakespeare's Theology of Grace in *All's Well That Ends Well*,'' *Renascence: Essays on Values in Literature* 51, no. 4 (Summer 1999): 235. In this vein, see also Gareth Roberts' observation that the King invokes exorcism when he initially sees the ''resurrected'' Helena in the play's final scene in '' 'An Art Lawful as Eating'?'' 137.

87. Reginald Scot, *Discovery of Witchcraft* (London, 1651), 269.

88. See Robert R. Reed Jr., *The Occult on the Tudor and Stuart Stage* (Boston: The Christopher Publishing House, 1965), 61. Caroline Bicks helpfully summarizes the numerous complex associations with Diana: ''As the Greek Artemis (fabled to be born in the grove of Ortygia near Ephesus) and the Roman Diana, she protected virginity; as Hecate, she embodied the mysteries of female power and sorcery; her association with the Amazons and with the ancient fertility goddess led to her formulation as Luna, goddess of the moon, and Lucina, the Roman goddess of childbirth.'' See *Midwiving Subjects in Shakespeare's England* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2003), 163–64.

89. See J. H. Aveling, M. D., *English Midwives: Their History and Prospects* (London: J. & A. Churchill, 1872), 42.

90. James Guillemeau, *Child-Birth or, The Happy Deliverie of Women* (London, 1612), 83.

91. Ibid.

92. See Elizabeth D. Harvey, ''Matrix as Metaphor: Midwifery and the Conception of Voice,'' in *Ventriloquized Voices: Feminist Theory and English Renaissance Texts* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 81. Martin Ingram notes that ''midwives and 'honest neighbours' commonly interrogated the woman at the very moment of birth, refusing to aid the delivery if she refused to name the father and invoking fears of death, judgement and hell if she was thought to be making a false accusation.'' See *Church Courts, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1570–1640* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 263. G. R. Quaife adds that ''girls'' who remained silent in the face of this goading ''were whipped, and confined to the House of Correction.'' He adds that the power of the church was also great in this regard, as it was not uncommon for penance for fornication to include the naming of the father. See *Wanton Wenches and Wayward Wives: Peasants and Illicit Sex in Early Seventeenth Century England* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), 105–6.

93. Jacob Rueff, German author of a treatise on midwifery quite similar to Guillemeau's, regarded changeling children as the work of the devil. Rueff originally published this work in German in 1554; it was not translated into English until 1637. As Alfred Brown notes in an essay appended to a recent edition of Rueff's work, ''The Obstetrics Booklet of Rueff,'' ''The great Luther himself believed that the devil substituted changelings for normal children and gave the signs by which they might be recognized. But more than that these changelings and monsters came as punishment for sin.'' See *The Expert Midwife, or An Excellent and Most Necessary Treatise on the Generation and Birth of Man*, The Classics of Medicine Library (New York: Gryphon Editions, 1997), 10. True to form, Robert Burton reassigns the theft of infants from fairies to witches, alleging that they ''*steal young children out of their cradles*, through the aid of demons, *and put deformed in their rooms, which we call changelings*.'' See *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 177. Wirt Sikes goes Rueff and Burton one better and provides instructions to kill a supposed changeling that are attributed to Luther, in conjunction with the Virgin Mary's alleged advice on the same subject. See *British Goblins: Welsh Folk-Lore, Fairy Mythology, Legends and Traditions* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1880), 58.

94. See Aveling, *English Midwives*, 9, which reprints the oath in its entirety, as well as Richard Wilson, ''Observations on English Bodies,'' 121–50.

95. Aveling, *English Midwives*, 9.

96. See Peter Hausted, *The Rival Friends, A Comedie* (1632), Number 601 The English Experience (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), V, viii. The play opens with Placenta's overseeing a changeling switch of a different order. She helps Constantina to run away after the lover who has abandoned her disguised as a boy, hiring a boy actor to play her before her father. In a double blind, the ''boy'' whom Placenta engages is actually yet another jilted woman, Isabella, disguised, in her turn, as a boy, and in woeful quest of her lover.

97. See Thomas Keightley, *The Fairy Mythology: Illustrative of the Romance and Superstition of Various Countries* (New York: Haskell House, 1968), 311–12. On the pervasiveness of belief in the fairy midwife story, Stephen Wilson writes, ''In folk tales from Wales to Hungary human midwives attended fairy mothers and vice versa.'' See *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2000), 171.

98. See Briggs, *The Vanishing People*, 78 and 97–99.

99. Guillemeau, *Child-Birth*, 83–84.

100. See, for example, *Wily Beguiled* (1606), where Pegge complains to her suggestively named grandam, Mother Midnight, that she has seen Robin Goodfellow, ''this *Mounsier Muffe*,'' lying on the Market Hill ''gaping vp in- / to the skies, / To know how many Maides would be with childe in the / towne all the yeare after.'' *A Pleasant Comedie Called Wily Begvilde* (1606) The Malone Society Reprints, ed. W. W. Greg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), scene xv, 1904–8.

101. Marliss Desens notes the sacrifice made of women of lower social position in bed tricks to preserve the chastity of their high-status sisters: ''This distinction between protected upper-class women and the lower-class women whose economic necessity causes them to participate in bed-tricks suggests some awareness by the writers of the way in which their society divides women into two groups: the idealized women who are above sex and the despised women who are associated only with sex. Female complicity in arranging bed-tricks based on this division of female nature shows that both genders internalize patriarchal attitudes as part of their socialization process.'' See Desens, *Bed-Trick*, 32.

102. See ''Subjectivity, Desire and Female Friendship in *All's Well That Ends Well*,'' *Literature and Psychology* 32, no. 4 (1986): 56.

103. Carolyn Asp contends that ''Through Helena's single-minded action a redefinition of gender prerogatives has occurred and as a consequence the patriarchal order is modified, if ever so slightly.'' I would add that part of what keeps the modification slight is the fact that dominance/submission is still the operative paradigm. See ''Subjectivity, Desire and Female Friendship,'' 61.

104. See *Angel with Horns and Other Shakespeare Lectures*, ed. Graham Storey (London: Longmans, Green and Co., Ltd., 1961), 87, 91.

105. See Janet Adelman's *Suffocating Mothers: Fantasies of Maternal Origin in Shakespeare's Plays, Hamlet* to *The Tempest* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 82, for another formulation of this basic point, minus the fairy connections. Adelman does note the witchy import of Helena's conduct. See also Lisa Jardine's conclusion that ''In acting out the atonement of pilgrimage and the fairy-tale 'restoration to favour' of the solving of the riddle (bed trick, ring game, and all), Helena is made a kind of wish-fulfillment solution to the paradox of the two-faced learned lady—a reconciliation of the opposed figurings of the educated woman as both symbol of civilization and social stability, and 'impudent' (a sexually disruptive force for social disor-

der).'' Jardine, ''Cultural Confusion,''12. Finally, the Countess D'Aulnoi references the traditional associations between healing arts and fairies in the tale ''The Well-Doer, or Quiribini,'' which deals with ''a Person, who had been educated by Fairies, and was perfectly Master of the occult Sciences.'' See *Diverting Works of the Countess D'Anois*, 623–24.

Conclusion

See Michael Drayton, ''Nimphidia—The Court of Fayrie,'' in *Minor Poems of Michael Drayton*, ed. Cyril Brett (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907), 124.

1. *FairyTale: A True Story*, directed by Charles Sturridge (Hollywood: Paramount Studios, 1997); *Photographing Fairies*, directed by Nick Willing (London: Dogstar Films, 1997); and *Peter Pan*, directed by P. J. Hogan (Hollywood: Universal Studios, 2003).

2. A.S. Byatt, *Possession: A Romance* (New York: Modern Library, 2001).

3. See Countess D'Aulnoi, ''Preface,'' *Queen Mab: Containing a Select Collection of Only the Best, Most Instructive, and Entertaining Tales of the Fairies* (London: J. Dodsley, 1770), and *The Memoirs of Madam, the Countess of D'Anois, before Her Retirement, The Diverting Works of the Countess D'Anois, Author of the Ladies Travels to Spain* (London, 1707).

4. See Jean E. Howard and Phyllis Rackin, *Engendering a Nation: A Feminist Account of Shakespeare's English Histories*, Feminist Readings of Shakespeare (New York: Routledge, 1997), 20–21.

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